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# East Pakistan

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**EAST  
PAKISTAN**

## HOW PEOPLE LIVE

GENERAL EDITOR **A. E. TUBBS** *Lecturer in Education, Birmingham University*

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THE AUTHORS *in this series of books write about other lands and peoples they know well. In each book they give you the sort of information you might be able to obtain for yourself if you travelled abroad to study how people live in other countries. With pictures, maps and words, the authors make it possible for you to understand different ways of life and work in different places.*

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HOW PEOPLE LIVE IN

# EAST PAKISTAN

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For Michael, Margaret, Meriel, Christopher and Nina

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#### DRAWINGS

Kenneth Mountney

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

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The Pakistan High Commissioner in London (pages 16, 87)

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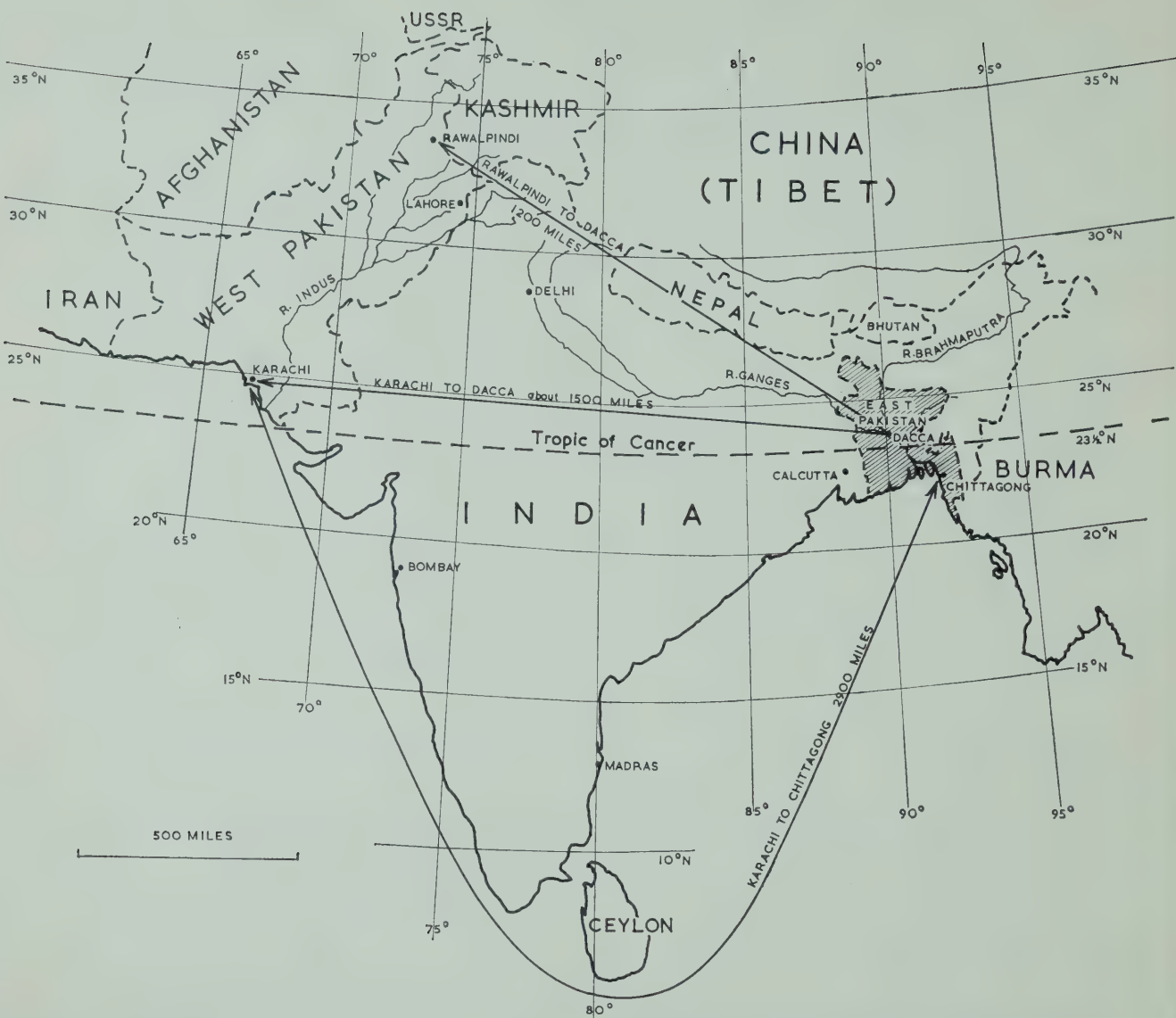


FIGURE 1. *The position of East Pakistan.*



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

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EAST PAKISTAN is a part of the state of Pakistan which came into being in 1947. When the British Government decided to give independence to her Indian Empire, the peoples of that vast country agreed to set up two states. Pakistan was created to include those parts of the Indian Empire where Muslims, the people practising the Mohammedan religion, formed the majority of the population. Unfortunately, the areas where this was the case did not make up one solid block of land, but two areas separated by 1,000 miles of the new state of India. You can see the two provinces of Pakistan, West and East, on Figure 1. Their nearest borders are almost 1,000 miles apart, but Dacca, the capital of East Pakistan, is 1,200 miles from Rawalpindi the new capital of the whole of Pakistan, and 1,500 miles from Karachi, the former capital and the most important city. Good air services cross India in a few hours to link the two parts of the country, but by sea the route passes round the southern tip of India and Ceylon, and the 2,900-mile journey takes more than a week. Perhaps you can imagine these distances better if you think of Spain and France together as West Pakistan, with its capital at Paris, and Turkey as East Pakistan, with its capital at Ankara.

The land of East Pakistan is largely the delta of the two huge rivers that join within its borders, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. Being a deltaic plain, much of the land is liable to flooding every

year, but some parts of the country are free from floods. These are shown on Figure 2. There are some stretches of slightly raised land within the delta itself, and Dacca stands on the southern tip of one of them, the Madhupur Tract. Another is the Barind in the north-west. On the eastern side of the country the land rises abruptly from the plains in the Chittagong and Sylhet Hills. At their highest these hills reach barely 3,000 feet, but they are very steep, covered in jungle and cut up by valleys into numerous parallel ridges.

The Tropic of Cancer passes close by Dacca, and the whole country enjoys a warm-to-hot climate. It never freezes, and the winter days are as warm as an English summer. As far as temperature is concerned there is little difference between the north-western and south-eastern extremities, 450 miles apart. People think little about the temperature, but their daily activities are much affected by the rainfall, and their comfort by the humidity. East Pakistan has a typical monsoon climate, in which there are well-marked dry and wet seasons. Even the driest part of the province, in the west, has more than 50 inches of rain in a year, while towards the hills in Sylhet there may be over 200 inches. But whatever the total, the rainfall is concentrated in the summer half of the year, between May and October, when about nine-tenths of the rain falls. During and just after the rains, the humidity of the air is very high, and people feel uncomfortably sticky.

There are over 42 million people in East Pakistan. Most of them speak Bengali and are Muslim by religion, but there is a sprinkling of non-Bengali people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. You may wonder how this great province of Bengali Muslims came into being, so far from the other concentration of Muslims in West Pakistan. The main reason was the mass conversion from Hinduism of most of the population six hundred or more years ago. Most of India was at that time ruled by Muslim invaders who had settled in what is now West Pakistan and had their capital at Delhi.

Practically the whole population of East Pakistan live in the

# EAST PAKISTAN

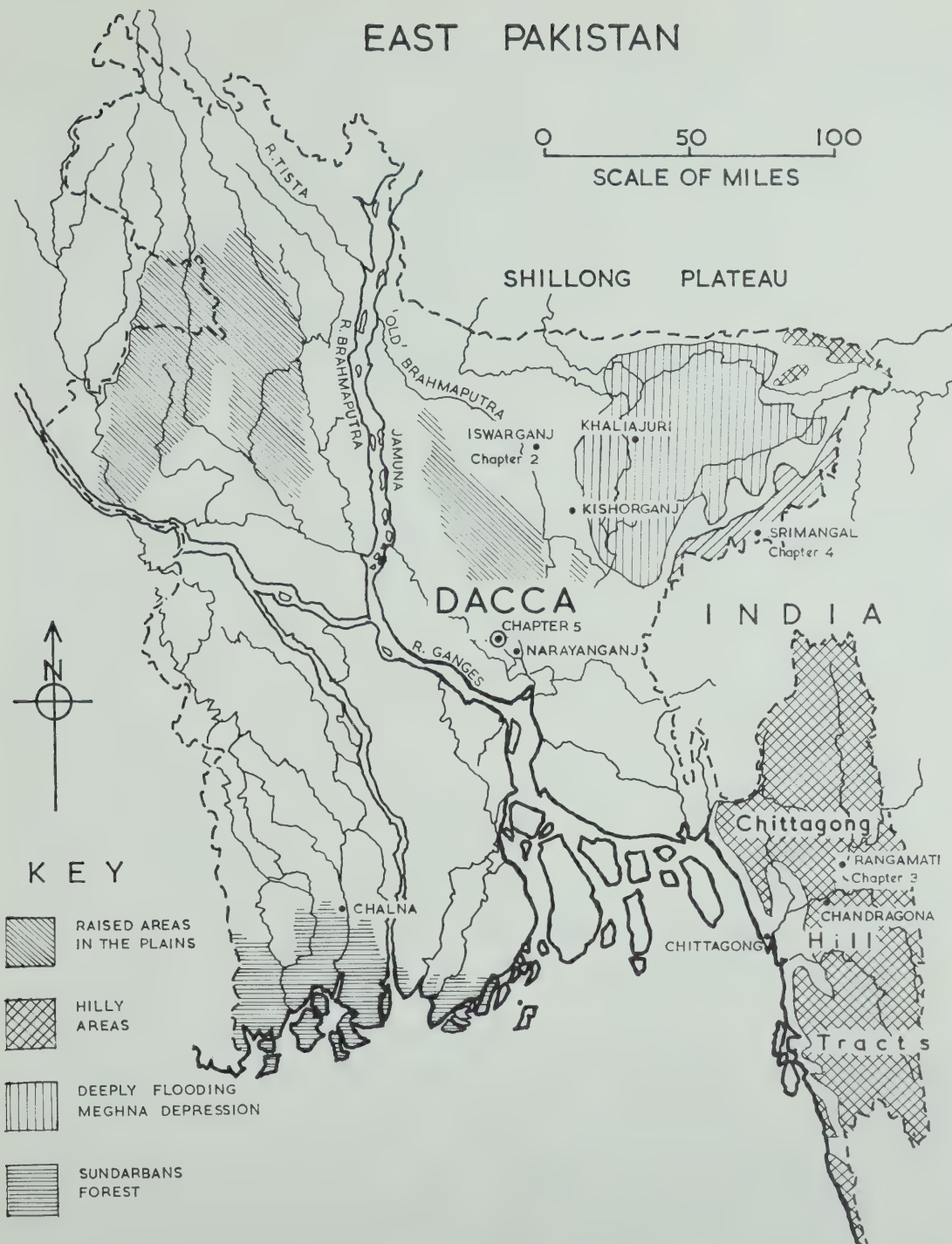


FIGURE 2.



countryside on their small farms. Only four out of every hundred people live in the towns. There are few parts of the world where so many people are crowded together and depend on the land for their livelihood. On average there are 777 people on every square mile of East Pakistan, but over great areas the density is more than 1,000 per square mile. It is the fertility of the soil brought down by the Ganges and Brahmaputra that makes possible such high densities of farming people. The annual floods, despite the damage that they often do, bring silt and muddy water to the land and help to keep the soil rich.

Four families have been chosen to represent the most typical ways of life you would see if you travelled through East Pakistan. There is first the Bengali farmer at Iswarganj, the most typical of all. Upon the foodstuffs and export crops that he and his kind produce depends the economy of the province. Secondly we shall visit a more primitive family in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, where the way of life is characteristic of all the hill country of South-East Asia. This family has little contact with the outside world of commerce. In contrast to these farming families intent mainly upon growing their own food, we have as our third example the family of a worker on a Sylhet tea plantation, where everything is organised to produce tea for export. Finally we go to the capital city, Dacca, where we meet a highly educated and "westernised" family closely in contact with the modern world of commerce, industry and education.

You can locate the homes of these families on Figure 2. There is not room here to tell you about every different way of life in East Pakistan, but if you could visit the country you would find most of the farmers on the plains (and that is 95 per cent. of the population) live much as our farmer at Iswarganj. All the tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts have much the same way of life as the family we describe, and one tea garden is very much like the next. If you look carefully at the maps and photographs you will probably find out for yourself as much again about these families as you will read in these pages.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FARMING THE DELTA PLAINS

#### *A Bengali Family of Mymensingh District*

ABDUL RAZAK is a reasonably prosperous Bengali farmer. Like the majority of his countrymen, he supports himself and his family by cultivating a few acres of the great flood plains of the Ganges-Brahmaputra river delta that forms most of the surface of East Pakistan. His *bari* or homestead stands on the outskirts of Iswarganj, a small country town in the heart of Mymensingh District (see map, Figure 2).

At first sight the plain on which Iswarganj stands appears very flat, but on closer inspection you would find there are slight but very important differences in level. This is true of the whole of the delta plain of East Pakistan, and it helps to understand the Bengali farmers' way of life if you know about these slight irregularities in the surface and how they came about. Figure 4 shows the landscape at Iswarganj in more detail.

When a great river like the Brahmaputra or the Ganges approaches the sea it is carrying a vast load of mud, silt and fine sand, called alluvium. During periods of flood both the volume and the current of the river increase, and it is able to move a still greater load of alluvium along its course. At the height of the flood season, however, the river overflows its banks to spread its muddy waters far across the countryside. As soon as the current of these waters

becomes less, away from the main channel of the river, the sand and heavier silt can no longer be transported, and so settle to the bottom. In time this process builds up a natural *levee* (or bank) along the sides of every river that floods regularly. Farther away from the river channel where the flood waters flow very gently, if at all, the finest silt and mud are deposited. This broad area where the flood waters tend to stagnate is called the backswamp. Compared with the levee, the backswamp is being built up much more slowly.

Rivers in flood are very liable to become unruly, cutting away parts of their banks and altering their courses from time to time. It is the combination of these processes of construction (by depositing their load), destruction (by erosion of banks) and redeposition of material in another place that has created the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta. Its surface is made up of two elements: the raised levees of rivers of former times as well as of the present day, and the backswamp depressions. The crests of the levees are overtopped by the most severe floods only, and even then may only be under water for

two or three days at a time. By contrast the lowest parts of the backswamp may be flooded for more than half the year, or may remain waterlogged the whole year round as a permanent lake or *bil*. It is convenient to use the term "floodland slope" to describe the gently sloping land between these two extremes. Here the land is flooded periodically for less than three or four months at a stretch. The distance between levee and backswamp varies from place to place but is commonly between a

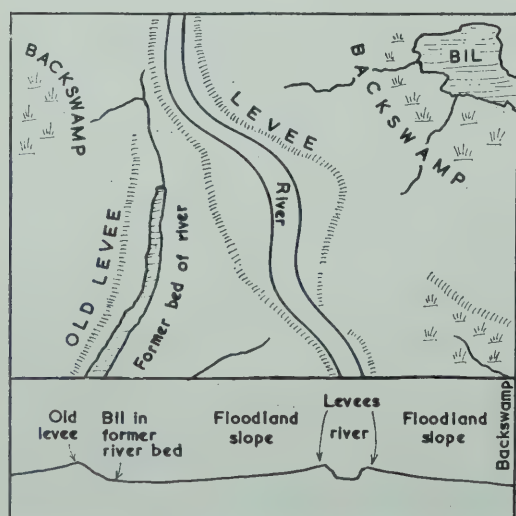


FIGURE 3. Diagram of a Bengali river plain.



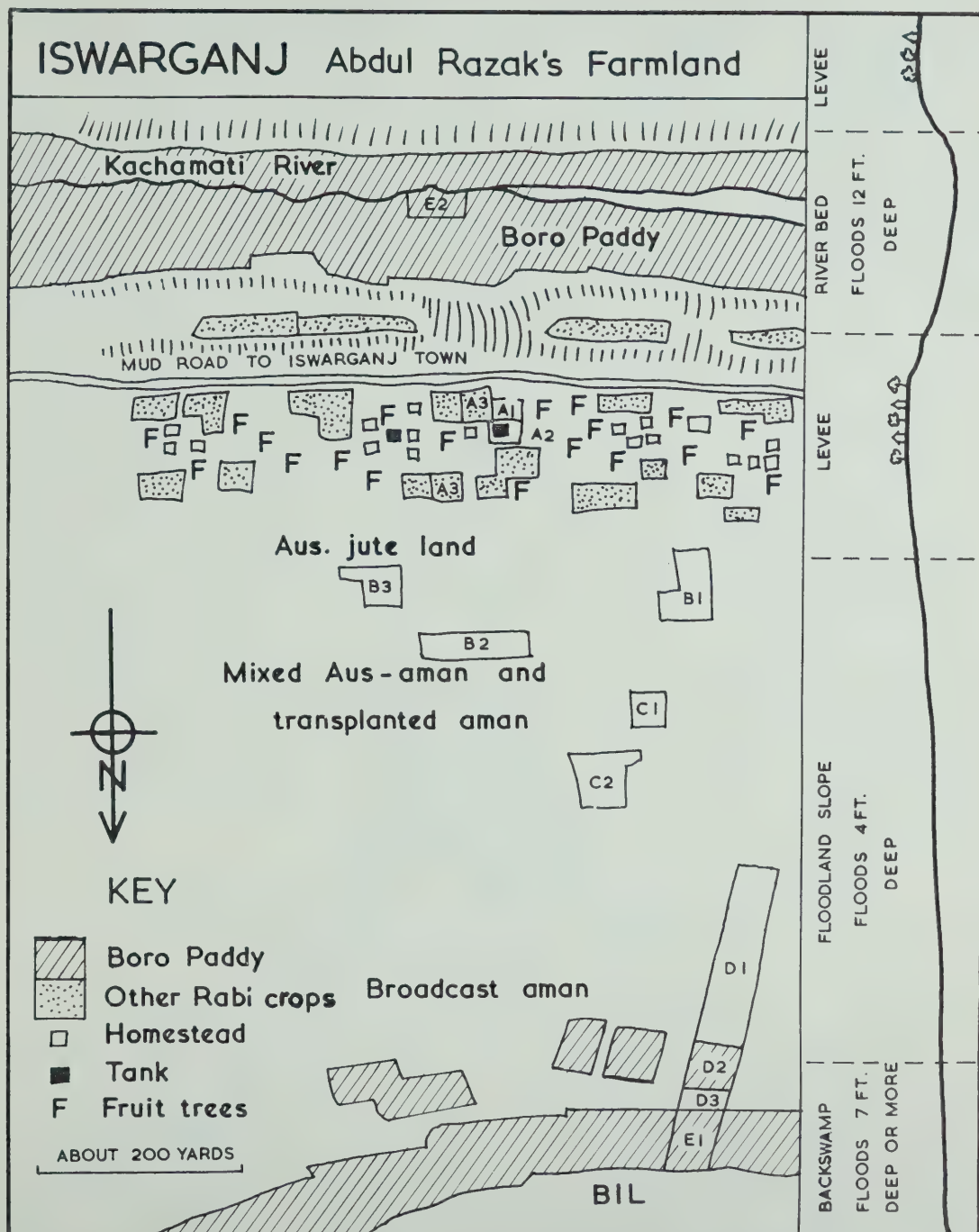


FIGURE 4. Note : the key to the crops in the fields marked is on page 30.

half and one and a half miles, while the difference in height is seldom as much as twenty-five feet.

Abdul Razak's homestead at Iswarganj (see map and cross-section, Figure 4) stands on the levee on the south bank of the Kachamati River and about fifteen feet above its bed. As is usual in Pakistan, his fields are not grouped together into one block of land, but are scattered about. Some lie in the bed of the Kachamati itself, a few are clustered immediately round the *bari* (homestead), while others are distributed on the floodland slope and along the edges of the permanent *bil* which occupies the lowest part of the backswamp. He thus has a share of each type of land in the district, and is able to grow a variety of crops at different seasons of the year.

Abdul Razak's two main worries are the rains and the floods. Frosts are unknown in this district, and plants can grow all the year round provided they have sufficient water. Unfortunately for the farmer, the monsoon climate as experienced in East Pakistan brings either an excess of rain or a severe drought, depending on the season. The diagram opposite gives you a good idea of the way rainfall is distributed month by month. Look first at the figures at the top showing the average monthly rainfall in inches at Kishorganj, a town twenty miles or so from Iswarganj. As far as rainfall is concerned, the year may be divided into three seasons:

November–March: the DRY SEASON, 5·1 inches.

April–May: the LITTLE RAINS, 18·4 inches,  
the “chota barsat.”

June–October: the RAINY SEASON, 69·3 inches.

The total rainfall averages 92·8 inches per year, which sounds a very great deal, as indeed it is. But do you notice how unevenly the rain comes throughout the year? The five months of the dry season receive little more than *one-twentieth* of the annual total, while *three-quarters* of the total falls in the five months of the rainy season from June to October.

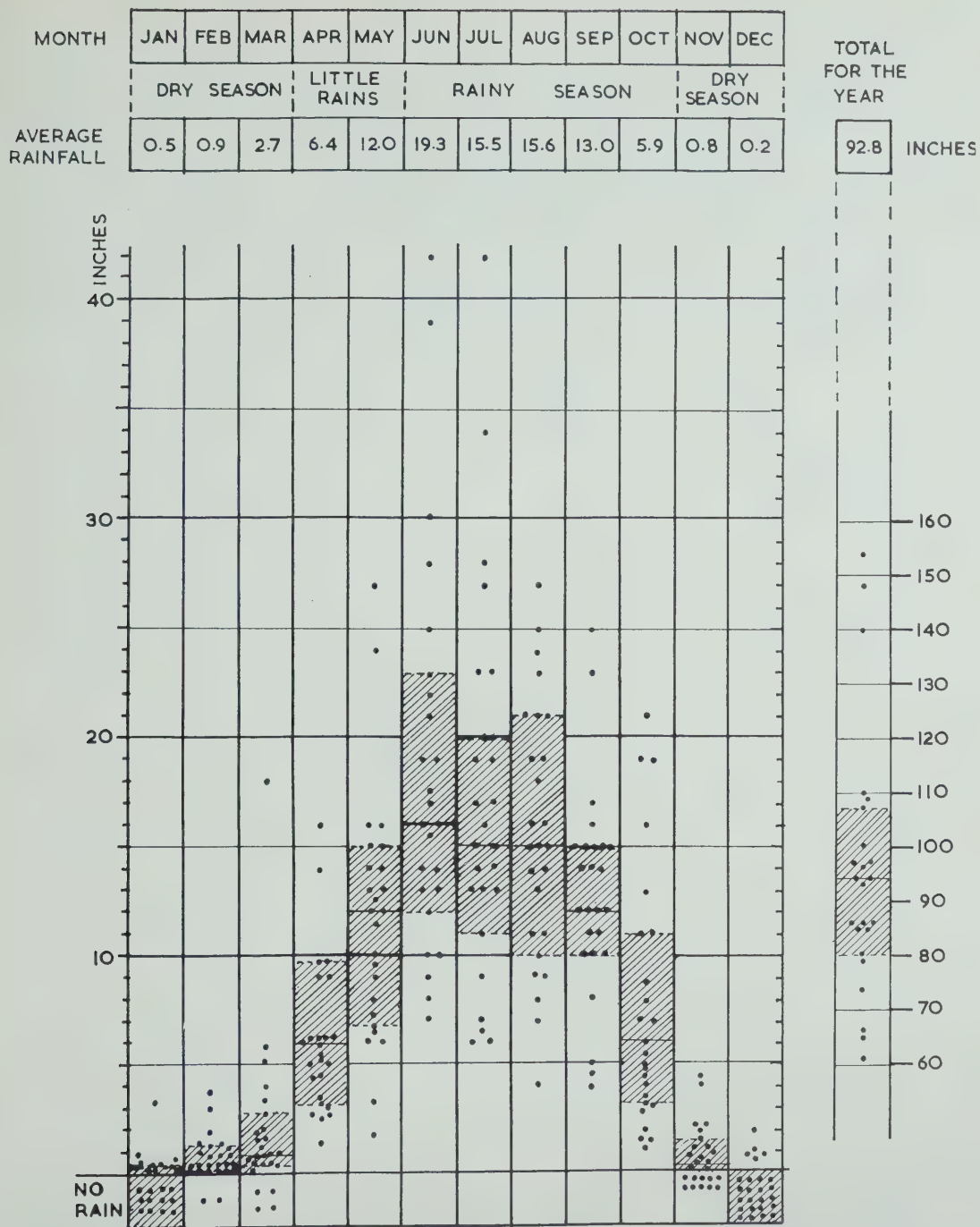


FIGURE 5. Rainfall scatter diagram for Kishorganji, Mymensingh. This shows the total rainfall received each month over a period of 25 years.



The Bengali farmers have a name for the season just before the main rains arrive: it is the "*chota barsat*," or "little rains." Towards the end of the dry season, in mid-March, the almost cloudless skies of the preceding months begin to cloud over, and occasional brief but violent storms of wind and heavy rain occur. Sometimes there are thunderstorms too, bringing rain and hailstones. During April and May such storms become more frequent and bring quite a lot of rain in an average year, but between the storms the sun shines and it is really hot. Early in June the monsoon rains "break," bringing continuous heavy rain to the whole country for days at a time, and the sun is blotted out by clouds. In August and September the gaps lengthen between periods of rain and the sun appears more frequently to generate an uncomfortable sticky heat. The rains peter out in October, after which only very occasional thunderstorms occur.

For Abdul Razak a very important feature of the rainfall is its variability from one year to another. The rainfall "scatter" diagram shows by the dots the *actual* monthly rainfall totals for twenty-five years, and it is from these that the averages are worked out. You can see that in every month there is a big difference between the highest and the lowest total received through the years.

During the dry season, particularly in November, December and January, no rain fell at all in many of the twenty-five years, yet now and then totals of two, three or four inches were received. The shaded portion of the diagram shows the range within which half the rainfall totals occur. In other words, Abdul Razak can reckon that there is an even chance that the rainfall will be within that range. No wonder he considers there is no prospect at all of rainfall in December and January! Even in February and March there may often be too little rain to soften the soil enough for him to start ploughing.

The "little rains" of April and May are more reliable, but sometimes they fade away after a promising start, and Abdul Razak faces the prospect of the failure of his early crops just when they have

begun to sprout. Once the monsoon rains break in June, the picture changes and he is likely to complain of too much rain flooding his land and causing the rivers to rise. Although the maximum rainfall comes in June, it takes some time to fill the local rivers and lakes, and still longer to fill the great rivers like the Brahmaputra, which reach their peak flood levels in August. By the end of September the floods are draining away, and in October Abdul Razak may again be worrying about there being not enough rain for his late rice crop. If the monsoon rains stop too early, the rice grains may not fill out and the harvest will be a light one.

On the double-page diagram we have tried to bring together the various factors affecting Abdul Razak's farming activities. Across the top is shown the weather month by month. Below the rainfall and temperature figures the diagram is divided into five sections running horizontally across the page, each representing a different level of land. The highest land is on the levee, three subdivisions of the middling land forms the floodland slope, with the lowest land in the backswamp bil. The use to which each kind of land is put at various seasons of the year is shown across the page. So that you can see the way in which the cropping seasons overlap, the diagram covers a period of eighteen months and starts with the earliest rains at the close of the dry season.

Abdul Razak thinks of his agricultural year as divided according to the three types of crops he grows, as shown in Figure 7.

- (a) Bhadoi crops—harvested in the rainy season;
- (b) Aman paddy—harvested at the beginning of the dry season;
- (c) Rabi crops—harvested during or at the end of the dry season.

The bhadoi crops, harvested in the rainy season in August and September, are sown in March or April. The main bhadoi crops are *aus* paddy and jute. *Aus* is a kind of rice that can be sown on fairly dry soil. It relies on light rainfall and grows without having

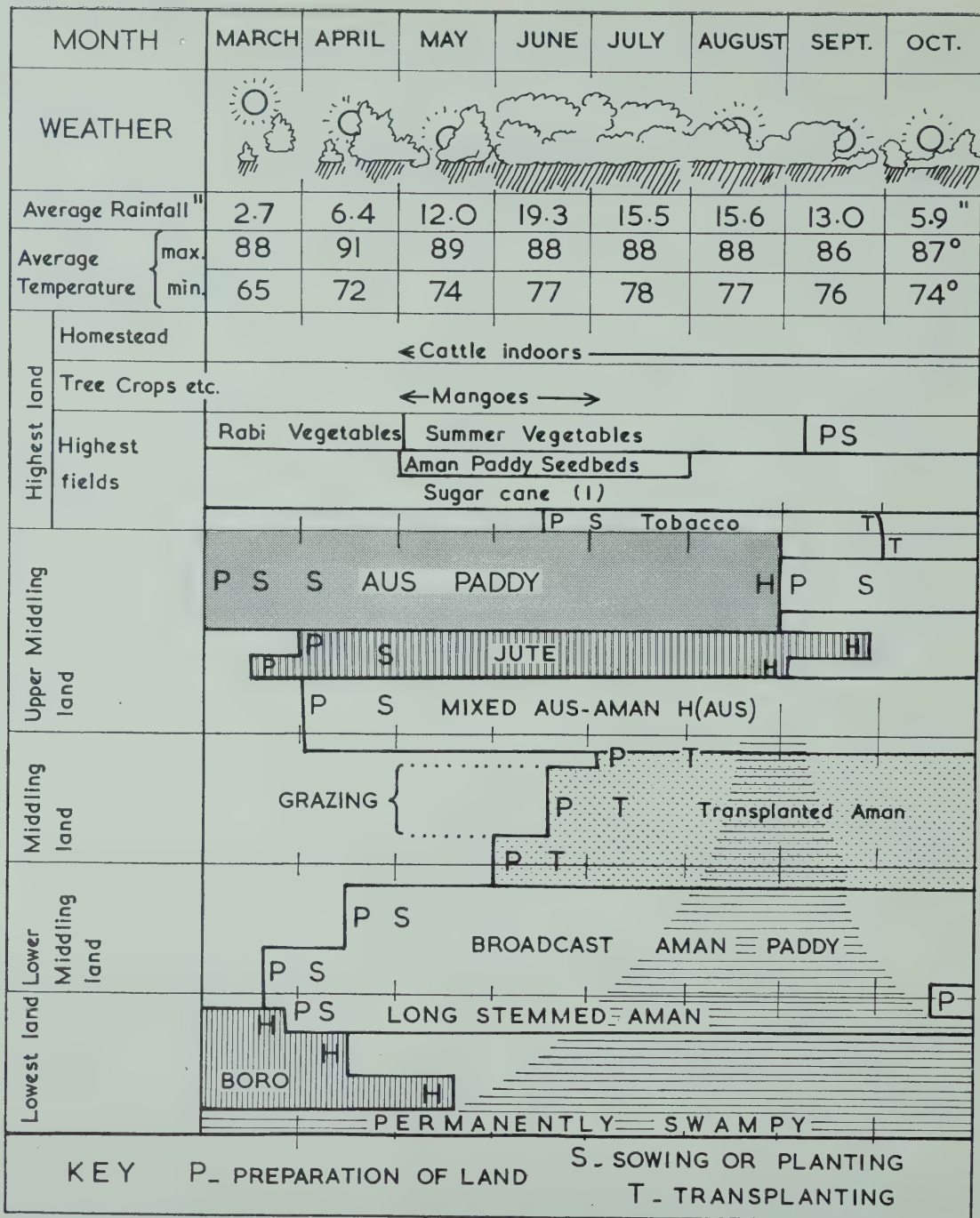
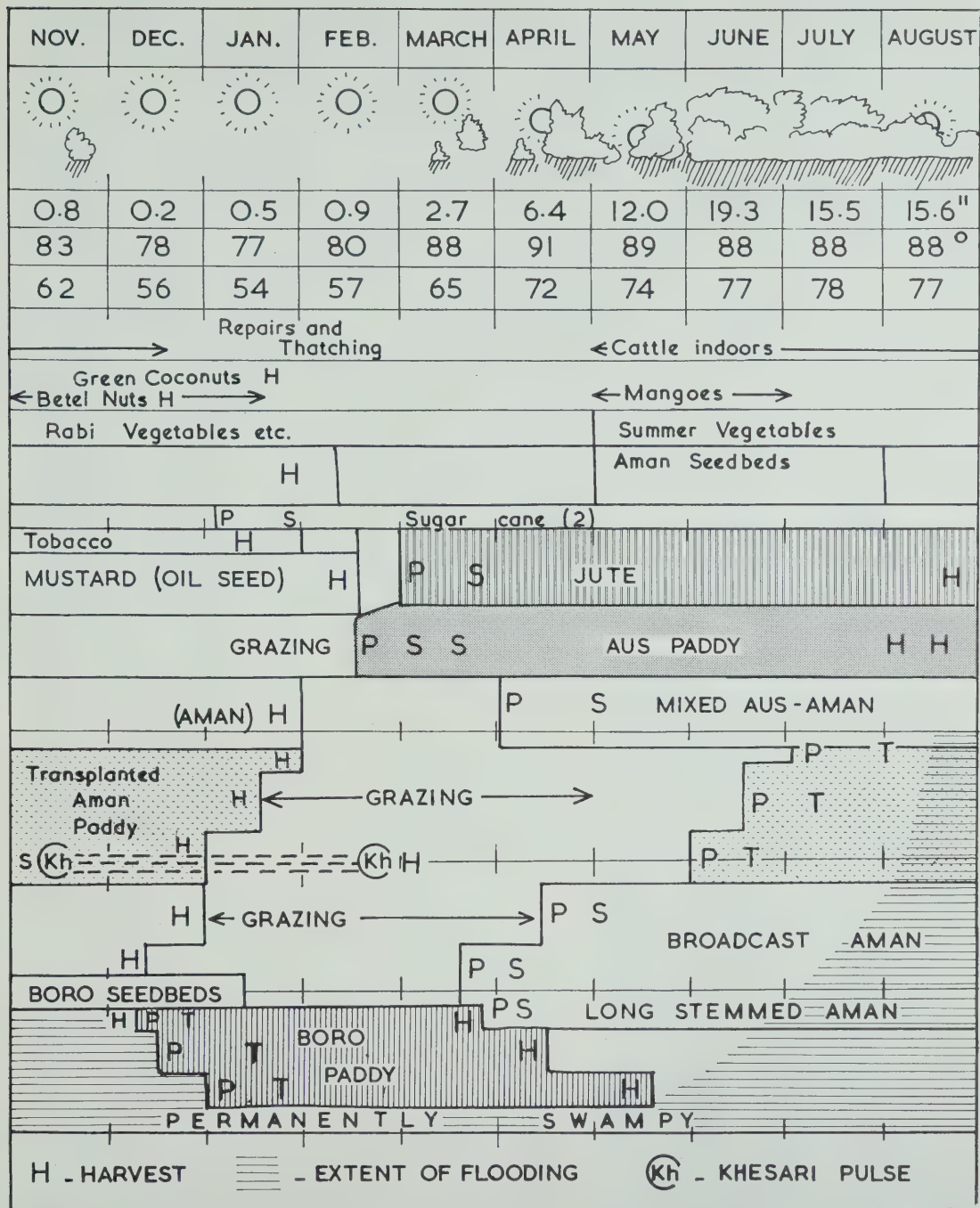


FIGURE 6. The seasonal use of the different levels of land at Iswarganj. The chart





*covers more than a year to show more clearly how all the different farming activities overlap. (The temperatures are at Mymensingh.)*

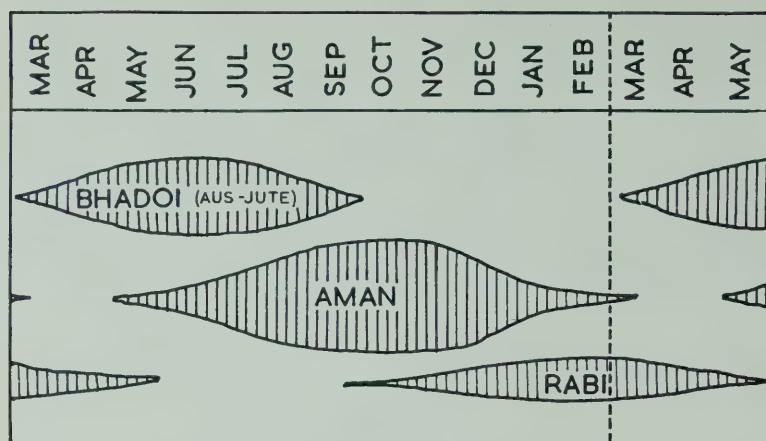


FIGURE 7. The periods when the chief types of crops are grown.

to stand in water. It does not grow higher than three or three and a half feet tall, and so cannot stand being flooded deeply. Jute is a fibre crop grown for sale—eventually to be made into sacking.

*Ploughing in the dry season. The wooden plough has an iron tip. Note the farmer's light cotton clothing and bare feet.*



Like aus it can be sown early in the year when the “little rains” have made the soil workable. It grows to a height of ten feet or more, but tends to be spoilt if it has to grow on flooded land. Abdul Razak grows his bhadoi crops on the upper-middling land only a little below the highest part of the levee where he has his homestead.

The dry sunny weather from November to early March bakes the ground hard, and Abdul Razak has to wait for a few showers of rain before the soil is soft enough for his plough team to work it. His plough is a light implement made of wood with a pointed share tipped with iron. Drawn by a pair of bullocks, it merely breaks the soil to a depth of six inches or so,





*The Bengali farmer's tools : (left to right) bamboo " ladder " harrow, weeding sickle, winnowing basket (held by the girl), plough (leaning against the house) and mattock (over the boy's shoulder).*

without turning it over. He has to plough and harrow the land as much as three times each in two directions in order to break up the clods to a fine enough tilth for sowing. If the clods are heavy, a long-handled mallet has to be used to break them before the light bamboo-frame harrow can be employed.

Aus and jute seed is always sown broadcast. On the field where jute is to be sown, Abdul Razak spreads composted water weeds, domestic refuse and ashes and cattle dung. The latter is also used for fuel in the kitchen, and there is not often much to spare for manuring the crops. When the crops stand four to six inches high he thins them out with a spiked harrow, and weeds them two or three times if time permits. The aus and jute land is seldom flooded and then only after he has harvested the aus and jute. None the less the harvest is not easy, as it takes place during the rains and





*Jute fields and "country boats." The jute here is already about eight feet tall and may grow more yet.*

it is sometimes difficult to dry the aus paddy properly in order to thresh it.

Aus paddy produces an inferior type of rice that does not keep



*Drying jute fibre on a bamboo frame.*





*Bales of "golden fibre." Jute arriving at the baling centre at Narayanganj. Note the river boats and factories in the background.*

well. It is therefore used by Abdul Razak and his family for food. The jute crop, on the other hand, is his main source of cash. When the jute stalks are cut they are bundled together and placed to soak in a shallow pond for three or four weeks—by which time the fibres can be separated from the inner stalk. After washing them thoroughly, and drying them on racks, Abdul Razak and his sons tie the fibres into neat silky golden skeins ready for market.

As so much of his land is down the floodland slope, his main crop of rice is of the kind known as *aman* paddy. This rice keeps well, and Abdul Razak is able to sell any surplus he can produce over and above his own family's requirements. Aman paddy can grow in flooded land, and is able to shoot up fast enough to keep pace with rising floodwaters. Some long-stemmed or "floating" varieties of aman grow to twenty feet long and ripen with their heads above water. Harvesting such a crop from a canoe is quite fun for Abdul Razak's grandsons, who don't mind a swim when the boat



tips up. The bundles of cut heads are piled into the canoe to be paddled carefully back to the homestead.

Abdul Razak has to prepare and sow the lowest-lying fields early in the year in order that the paddy will be growing strongly by the time floods come. He sows long-stemmed aman in the fields near the backswamp *bil* in April as the water will flood deepest here, to a depth of at least seven feet. Slightly higher up and a fortnight or so later he sows the main crop of "broadcast" aman which occupies his fields on the lower-middling land where floods may arrive in July.

He grows his best-quality rice a little higher still, about the middle of the floodland slope. For this crop he takes a great deal of trouble. In May he clears and ploughs a small patch of land alongside the artificial pond or "tank" near the homestead, and sows it thickly with aman paddy seed. He keeps the seed bed weeded and well watered from the tank if there is not enough rain. Meanwhile, he ploughs and harrows his fields on the middling land, carefully repairing the bund that surrounds each little field. The bund is a low mud wall rising perhaps one foot above the level of the field.

*Before planting out the paddy, the mud has to be levelled with a board as in this picture. You can see the low "bunds" or walls round the field, which will keep the water in.*







*Transplanting boro paddy seedlings is hard work. The bundle of seedlings in the foreground is standing on the stubble of the previous aman paddy crop.*

Its job is to hold the rainwater that collects on the field. When the paddy plants in the seed bed are ten to twelve inches high (usually about four weeks after sowing) they are ready for pulling up and transplanting. The plots to be planted out are by now covered with soft wet mud which has been levelled to keep water at an even depth. The seedlings have to be transplanted by hand, and Abdul Razak's sons and his hired labourers are kept busy at this back-breaking task for days until all the fields are planted out.

The early part of the rainy season is the hardest for the farmer and his helpers. So much has to be done before the floods reach their peak and make work in the fields well-nigh impossible. Apart from tending the aman crop, there is weeding to be done in the fields of aus and jute, and fodder grass to be cut from the roadside for the animals. Towards the end of the rains the ears of rice are filling out, and a few timely showers in October can improve the yield





*The paddy harvest. Only the upper ten inches or so of the stalk are cut at first. Later the rest may be cut for cattle fodder.*

greatly. The November sunshine ripens the aman fields to a rich golden yellow, but there is yet work to be done before harvest.

This is really the beginning of the rabi crop season, the third division of the year. On some of the fields of transplanted aman, Abdul Razak now broadcasts a small pea-like seed called *khesari* which will germinate slowly and spring into full leaf when the paddy harvest is over. Lower down the slope, as the floods retreat, he prepares a seed bed for still another crop of rice, *boro* paddy, watering it from the nearby bil if need be. The plough team of two bullocks has also been busy in September and October on the upper middling land and on the levee, preparing fields for the dry-season crops of vegetables, mustard seed (grown to be crushed for cooking oil) and for transplanting tobacco seedlings.

December is a period of cheerful activity. The sun shines from a cloudless sky, the air is dry and invigorating, and memories of floods and drenching rains are far behind. Everyone is busy with





*Treading out paddy from the ear. The cattle are muzzled.*

the cutting and threshing of the aman paddy; food is plentiful and a month or two of relative ease is in prospect for most of the family. After the paddy is harvested by hand with a sickle and tied into small sheaves, it is carried to the threshing floor outside the bari where the cattle trample it to separate the grain from the ears and straw. The chaff is removed by fanning with the winnowing basket, and the paddy is then ready for putting into store. True, there is the boro paddy to be transplanted and then to be regularly irrigated with the water scoop, but only a part of Abdul Razak's land is under rabi crops, and time can be spared from the fields to go visiting relatives and to repair the houses.

Not everyone is free to take a holiday, however. Abdul Razak's second son, Harum el Rashid, is anxious to save up enough money to get married. With his twelve-year-old nephew, Mohammed Ali, and one of the labourers, Sirajul Islam, he has trekked to Khaliajuri with a herd of a dozen cattle belonging to his father and to other relatives and friends in Iswarganj. Khaliajuri (see Figure 2) lies about thirty miles due east of Iswarganj, and it takes Harum el Rashid nearly a week to drive the herd there along mud roads and tracks





*Cattle grazing lush pastures at Khaliajuri. The village is raised on a man-made embankment to keep it above the summer floods.*

and often across open country intersected by unbridged rivers. The expedition is well worth while, however. The region they visit contains relatively few people, as for six months of the year, from May till October, it lies under twelve feet of water. Then only the villages show above the surface of the vast lake that stretches during the rains for nearly fifty miles across the low-lying basin of the Meghna River. In the dry season the waters recede, and rich natural pastures are exposed on which Harum's herd, together with thousands of other cattle driven from surrounding districts, can fatten and thrive in a manner impossible on the poor grazing of the rice stubble back at home in Iswarganj. At Khaliajuri they construct a temporary home. Besides their bedding and cooking equipment, they take with them also two ploughs, a dunga (water scoop) and a stock of boro paddy seed, for land can be rented cheaply around Khaliajuri. While young Mohammed Ali keeps an eye on the grazing cattle, Harum and Sirajul Islam quickly cultivate a seed bed and three acres of paddy fields close by a bil. When the boro seedlings have been transplanted they are kept busy weeding and irrigating till harvest time in April. Harum's elder brother, Habibur Rahman, comes over for a couple of weeks with the other hired labourer, Nazimuddim, to help harvest



the boro paddy and to carry it home to Iswarganj on the backs of the sleek, well-fed cattle. Harum's relatives and friends are happy to pay him well for bringing their animals back in such a healthy condition, and to buy his stock of boro paddy. After a day or two of cheerful haggling, Harum has sufficient money added to his savings to buy an acre of land. This he intends to join to his share of his father's farm and so make a holding large enough to support a family of his own.

During the absence of Harum el Rashid at Khaliajuri, Abdul Razak and Habibur Rahman have been occupied at Iswarganj cultivating and watering the two patches of boro paddy: one in the nearly dry bed of the Kachamati River, the other on the edge of the back-swamp bil. The small tobacco crop has been cut and dried in January to make hookah (pipe) smoking for the men-folk, and in February the mustard seed was ripe for harvesting. When threshed, Habibur took a quarter of the seed to the oil mill in the village to be crushed, and came home with enough cooking oil to last the family three months, though his wife was rather anxious lest it should go bad before the end of that time. The fields have yielded other useful rabi crops also: potatoes, tomatoes and radishes have made a welcome addition to the pot, and there have been spices to harvest and preserve for the rest of the year—hot red chillies and the root of the haldi (turmeric) plant for flavouring and colouring yellow the curry sauce that with boiled rice forms the basic diet of the farming family. Eggs, fish and, once or twice a week, goat meat or chicken may be added

*A “dunga” water scoop, used to raise water from the pool on the right into the field in the foreground.*





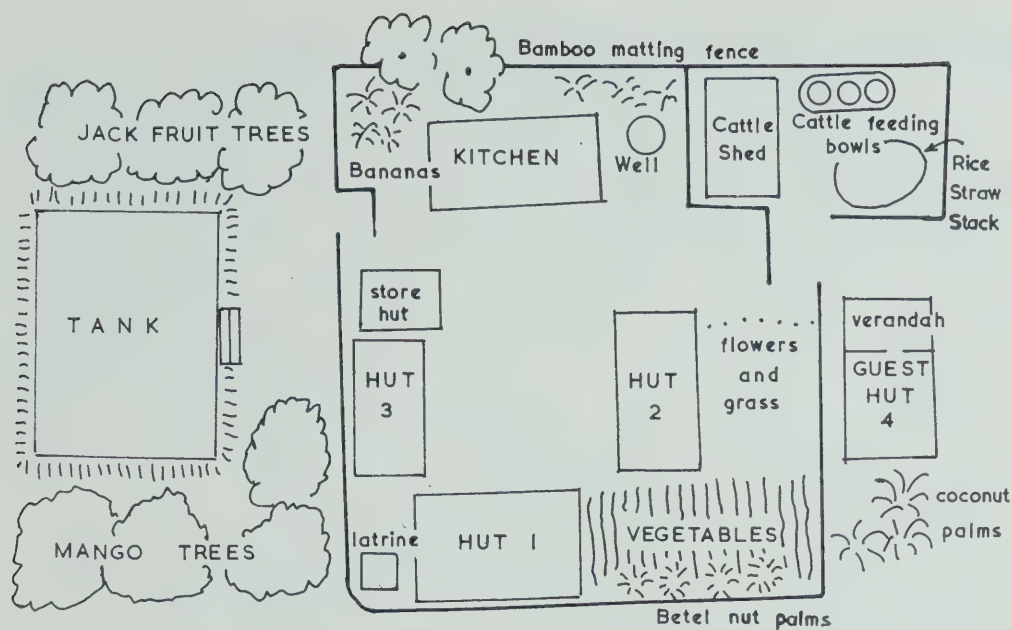


*Air view of a Bengali homestead. Note the huts round a central open space, the shady fruit trees, the tanks and the vegetable patches close to the homestead along the roadside.*

to the curry, but it is rice that is the main food in East Pakistan. The main meal is eaten in the evening, and any rice left over is taken cold next morning as a breakfast snack with hot watery milk or tea. A light cooked meal is eaten at midday. At busy seasons of the year Abdul Razak's wife sends the food out into the fields by one of her grandchildren.

Another important job to be done during the dry season is to repair and re-thatch the huts of the bari. Figure 8 shows the layout of Abdul Razak's homestead. Like most country homes in East Pakistan, it consists of a number of small huts ranged about a courtyard. As it is always very warm, this arrangement has the advantage of allowing the breeze to circulate round each room, as the walls of the huts are merely flimsy bamboo or grass matting attached to the bamboo framework. The air view shows a typical homestead with its tank nearby.





### DETAIL OF HUT 1.

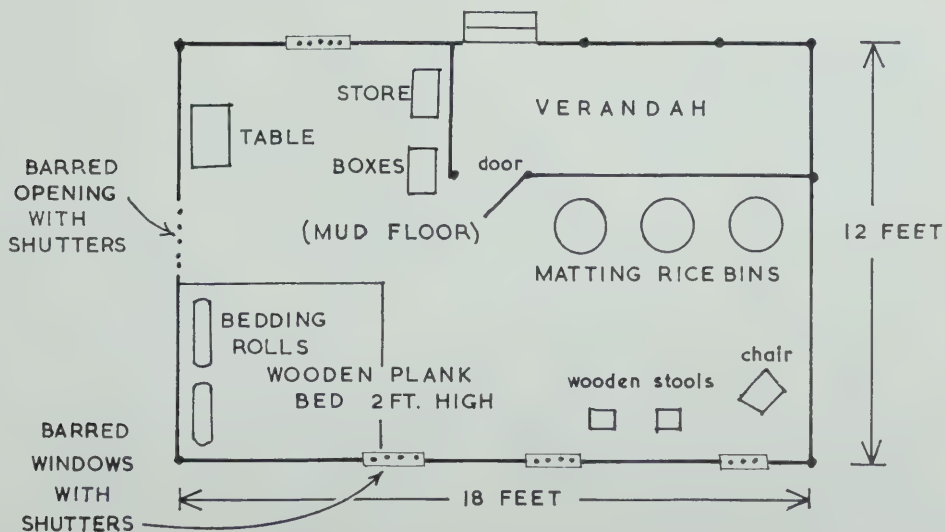


FIGURE 8. The layout of Abdul Razak's homestead.



*Abdul Razak's house. The high earth plinth keeps it above water during heavy rain or floods. A heavy iron roof like this needs strong timber supports. The boys are cutting open a green coconut to drink its refreshing "milk." On the ground behind the children paddy is spread out to dry in the sun.*

The living quarters (huts 1, 2 and 3), the guest hut (4) and the kitchen are of the same basic construction. There is a mud platform rising about two feet above the level of the courtyard, and upon this is built the stout bamboo framework that supports the walls and roof. Some of the walls are of woven grass matting, others of split bamboo slats or dry jute stalks with a covering of mud. Abdul Razak uses three kinds of roofing material. The kitchen is thatched with grass, while the cattle shed has a roof made of flattened kerosene (paraffin) tins, and his own living quarters have a corrugated galvanised-iron roof, which is excellent for keeping out the wet, but rather noisy when the rain is heavy. Thatching has to be renewed each year, and every three or four years white ants and decay destroy the main supports so that they have to be replaced.



Abdul Razak's wife and daughter-in-law keep the courtyard and the mud plinths of the huts in spotless condition by frequent sweeping and applications of fresh mud. Originally the earth for the plinths was dug out to form the tank that adjoins the bari. Besides keeping the family above the mud that accumulates in the courtyard during the rains, the plinths have often served as a last refuge when the flood-waters of the Kachamati have overflowed the levee. The tank is an important feature of most Bengali homesteads, for in it the family take their daily bath. Its waters are used also for fishing, for watering and washing the cattle, and to irrigate aman seed beds and young tobacco plants. Abdul Razak is very proud of his tube well from which the family obtain their domestic water supplies. It

*The Bengali tank is often a beautiful picture of still water reflecting coconut palms. The steps are used daily by the family going to bathe. The sugar-date palm in the foreground, right, has been notched to extract the sweet juice.*



cost him Rs.400 (£30) to have it sunk to a depth of over 100 feet, but he is convinced of its value as none of the family has suffered severe dysentery since they stopped drinking the polluted water of the tank. The well you can see on Figure 8 is a shallower type, used now for watering the stock.

Abdul Razak and his wife occupy the hut marked 1 on the plan which also shows details of its interior. The hut is their bedroom and living-room, though during most of the day they use the verandah rather than the rather dark interior. Similarly, hut 2 is the living quarters of Habibur Rahman and his family, while hut 3 which his grandfather used to use before he died is being renovated by young Harum el Rashid as a home for his prospective bride. All the little "households" share the kitchen, and as often as not join in a common meal. Part of the kitchen is a store-room, but just after the aman harvest there is so much paddy to store that matting bins, three feet in diameter, are put up in any convenient corner of the living quarters.

As Abdul Razak is a strict and old-fashioned Mohammedan, the womenfolk of the family observe *purdah*, that is to say they do not allow menfolk (outside the family circle) to see their faces. Thus when they go to the village they have to cover their faces, but within the courtyard of the bari they can move about unveiled, as there is a high matting fence all round. You may think this makes it very awkward for Abdul Razak and his sons to entertain their friends, and it certainly would be but for the fact that they have a fourth hut standing just outside the front gateway through the fence. Most reasonably well-to-do Bengali farmers have such a hut, which is called the "baithak khana," the "sitting-room" or guest house. It has a wider verandah than the others, and here the menfolk squat to chat with their friends. Visitors sleep inside the guest house, and the hired labourers sleep rolled up in their bedding on the verandah, and are expected to act as nightwatchmen.

Because of their *purdah* the womenfolk spend most of their time in the bari, preparing food for the family and cleaning up generally.



They are kept quite busy, for each day they have to husk the rice to be used for the main meals. The paddy grain after it is threshed from the ear still has a hard skin or husk. To remove this, the paddy is first boiled a while and dried on mats in the sun. The husk is then crisp and when pounded by the woman will break off easily in a rice husker. The brownish rice is then ready to cook, and the husks are stored to be burnt to make smoke to keep troublesome flies off the cattle. Every day, also, the curry spices have to be ground on a stone slab with a stone roller. This work occupies the women most of the morning, and after the midday meal is cleared away they are glad of a sleep or a chat in the shade before it is time to prepare the bigger evening meal.

As you can see from Figure 8, there is very little furniture. The family eat their meals squatting on the ground and dipping their hand in the dish, so tables and chairs are rare indeed, and reserved for the head of the family or for honoured guests. Each house has a big plank bed, but in poorer homes the people sleep on the floor. Cotton quilts are used for bedding (you can see one hanging up to air on page 26). Spare clothes and bedding are bundled up and hung from the rafters, and valuables like books and spare dishes will be stored in boxes.

Altogether, the homestead looks airy and pleasantly shaded. Mango and jack fruit trees surround the tank, while nearer the huts there are clumps of coco-nut and betel-nut palms and banana plants. Following a visit to the city of Dacca, where he was impressed by the flower gardens of the great houses there, Abdul Razak has laid out some pretty flower beds and a small grass lawn.

He is quite a prosperous farmer by Bengali standards. His  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land support his own and his sons' wives and families, and he can afford to pay two labourers all the year round, and to employ additional help when it is needed. Abdul Razak is more fortunate than many. His younger brother, Abdul Samad, had a farm on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, but almost all his land

was washed away by a disastrous flood and he had to give up farming. He invested his small savings in a boat, and now makes a living plying along the rivers between Iswarganj and Narayanganj, carrying cargoes of jute to the mills there, and rice for the townspeople. His son, Ghulam Mohammed, was lucky to get a job at one of the jute-baling mills, where the fibre is packed tight ready for shipment overseas. We shall meet Ghulam in a later chapter. Though he is quite happy in his new town life, he is sometimes homesick for the countryside where he spent his boyhood and visits his uncle Abdul Razak every December to help with the aman harvest.

In conclusion, let us look again at Abdul Razak's farm in the summary of his fields below. The field letters and numbers can be checked on the map (Figure 4). All the areas are in acres.

#### A. HIGHEST LAND

(on the levee)

1 acre  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{1}{4} \text{ Bari (A1)} \\ \frac{1}{4} \text{ Tank and fruit trees (A2)} \\ \frac{1}{2} \text{ Rabi, vegetables, seed beds, tobacco, sugar cane} \end{array} \right.$

$\frac{1}{4}$  acre grows a second crop of vegetables.

#### B. UPPER MIDDLING LAND

$2\frac{1}{2}$  acres  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1\frac{1}{2} \text{ Aus paddy (B1, B2)} \\ 1 \text{ Jute (B3)} \end{array} \right.$

$1\frac{1}{2}$  acres is used in the rabi season as well: 1 for mustard,  $\frac{1}{2}$  for pulses (lentils).

#### C. MIDDLING LAND

$1\frac{1}{2}$  acres  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{1}{2} \text{ Mixed aus-aman (C1)} \\ 1 \text{ Transplanted aman (C2)} \end{array} \right.$

$\frac{1}{2}$  acre of the transplanted aman is undersown with Khesari pulse for use as fodder for the cattle.

#### D. LOWER MIDDLING LAND

$1\frac{1}{2}$  acres  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 \text{ Broadcast aman (D1)} \\ \frac{1}{2} \text{ Long-stemmed aman (D2) and small patch of boro seed bed (D3)} \end{array} \right.$

$\frac{1}{4}$  acre of the lower part grows boro paddy as a second crop.

#### E. LOWEST LAND

1 acre  $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \frac{1}{2} \text{ acre in backswamp} \\ \frac{1}{2} \text{ acre in bed of Kachamati River} \end{array} \right\}$  Boro paddy only



*Boats like this carry much of the internal trade of East Pakistan on the numerous rivers.*



You will see that although he has  $7\frac{1}{2}$  acres of land Abdul Razak is able to use  $2\frac{1}{2}$  of these acres twice during the year, making his total cropped area 10 acres. He would like to cultivate still more of his fields during the dry season, but he is prevented from doing so by the traditional practice of his neighbours, who turn their cattle and goats to graze the stubble after the aman harvest. He is able to fence off the fields near the bari and to keep an eye on them, but it is more difficult to prevent damage to isolated fields in the middle of the open floodland slope.

As we said earlier, most of the crops grown are for the family's own consumption. Abdul Razak sells his jute fibre to a dealer in the market in Iswarganj, though sometimes he arranges for his brother Abdul Samad to take it on his boat direct to the baling mill at Narayanganj, where he can get a better price. Similarly, the aman paddy over and above domestic needs is sold at the local market, or again through Abdul Samad at Narayanganj, where there is keen demand for rice to feed the mill workers. Whether any other produce is sold depends on the abundance of the harvest. There may be more mangoes, betel-nuts or coco-nuts than the family needs, in which case Habibur Rahman with the help of his son collects the fruit of the tree and takes them to sell in the weekly market in Iswarganj.

Market day is a noisy social occasion. Everybody with something to sell takes up a place in the market square and displays his

goods, and squats behind them all day and late into the evening till they are sold. You may think Abdul Razak's family have little need to sell and buy, as they can feed themselves off their own farm produce. Their main need for money is to pay the land revenue to the government. Then there is the cost of the children's schooling, for there is no free nor compulsory education yet. Abdul Razak is well known as a generous supporter of the Mosque, where he attends prayers every Friday, and being one of the more well-to-do townsmen of Iswarganj (though by no means the wealthiest) he is called upon by many charities. Money is needed to buy the foodstuffs, materials and utensils that cannot be home-produced. Tea and matches, shirts and cloth to make *saris* for the women and *lungis* for the men, lamps (and paraffin to fill them with), cooking pots and spoons, ploughs and reaping sickles—all these necessary articles and many others from time to time, have to be purchased with the proceeds of the farm produce Abdul Razak sells.

This then is the way of life of a typical farming family in the plains of East Pakistan. It has probably changed very little for hundreds of years, and is unlikely to change drastically for some generations to come. Abdul Razak and his sons are wise and prudent farmers. They take note of new ideas in farming practice, and apply some of them that suit their needs. They use ammonium sulphate as a fertiliser, and have adopted the new way of planting the paddy seedlings in rows so that they will be easier to weed. But in many respects they remain tied by tradition and social custom to the ways of their ancestors. Abdul Razak's father had fifteen acres, twice as much land as his son, and when Abdul Razak dies, Habibur Rahman and Harum el Rashid will divide the property again according to Mohammedan law. Thus as the population increases generation after generation, there is less land for each person, and inevitably the standard of living must fall even below the present very simple level unless people can find jobs outside farming.



## CHAPTER THREE

### LIFE IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

*People of the  
Tenchauungya Clan*

ON the east, the frontier of East Pakistan lies generally within the hill country that extends for more than 100 miles into the Indian state of Assam and into Burma. The peoples of this hill country, whether in Pakistan, India or Burma, practise a way of life quite different from and in some ways more primitive than that of the plainsman Bengali. It is a way of life that is found extensively throughout the uplands of South-East Asia and the East Indies. Its most characteristic feature is that it is based upon "shifting cultivation."

In East Pakistan just over a quarter of a million people obtain their living mainly by shifting cultivation. They all live in the district known as the Chittagong Hill Tracts, in the south-east of the country. Whereas the majority of the people in East Pakistan are Muslim by religion, the hillmen of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are for the most part Buddhists. Some are Hindus, and a few might be described as "animists" with very primitive religious ideas. The largest group is the Chakma Tribe, which includes nearly half the tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Compared with the delta plains of the rest of East Pakistan, the Hill Tracts are very difficult to reach. There are no roads open to traffic all the year round, and the rough roads that do exist become impassable during the rainy season (from about May to October)

and have to be cleared of newly grown bamboo and tall grass at the beginning of the dry season to make them wide enough for jeeps. The main all-weather route into the district is by river launch along the Karnafuli River which enters the sea at Chittagong. There is a daily launch service from Chittagong to Rangamati. Farther south, the Sangu River provides a less-important means of entry to the hill country. Apart from these lines of communication, travel within the Hill Tracts, and between them and the plains, is by more primitive methods. Most people journey on foot, often using the sandy beds of streams as paths in the dry season. Government officials often find elephant transport most convenient, for these intelligent beasts can pick their way along the overgrown paths through the jungle, and can ford all but the largest rivers. The elephants are captured in the more remote forests near the Burma border to be trained for work by the Forest Department.



*Crossing the Karnafuli River by the Chandragona Paper Mill. The hillside in the background is a patchwork of new clearings and bamboo jungle.*





*Bamboo raft on the Karnafuli River.*

It takes about eight hours to chug up the Karnafuli River from Chittagong to Rangamati. For the first two or three hours the journey is through flat land covered in rice fields. Long views across the bright green fields are interrupted here and there by clumps of mango trees and coco-nut palms shading the homesteads clustered on slightly raised ground. The hills are in sight all the time, but as one approaches their hazy blue gives place to a patchwork of various shades of green and pale yellow. At close view the different greens are seen to be either bamboo jungle at various stages of growth, or mixed jungle of tall trees, bamboo and grass. The yellow patches are newly made clearings where the bamboo has been cut and left to dry. For mile upon mile and ridge after ridge, the hill country looks like this, except where the Forest Department has taken over to protect the natural timber or to replace it by plantations of teak.

Soon after entering the hills the launch makes a halt at a busy landing-stage backed by a most unexpected sight—a large modern factory set in the midst of the jungle. This is one of East Pakistan's proudest achievements, the Chandragona Paper Mill. The reason





*These crowded brick huts house the workers at Chandragona Paper Mill.*

for its presence close to where the Karnafuli issues from the Hill Tracts is not difficult to discover. Close to the landing-stage are moored great rafts of bamboo, each the size of a football pitch. Bamboo is the raw material from which high-grade paper is made in Chandragona. It is cut by the hill people in the jungles throughout the Hill Tracts and is floated downstream in rafts. These increase in size as more supplies from tributary valleys meet the main river. Near the mill has sprung up a small town to house the 3,000 workers and their families who have come here from all parts of East Pakistan except the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The hill people find it harder to adapt themselves to factory life than do the plainsfolk. It has not yet proved possible to attract them to work at the mill for more than short periods of a fortnight or so at a time.

An hour upstream from Chandragona the launch passes another site of energetic activity. Here bulldozers, earth dumpers and giant rollers, and swarming gangs of labourers with mattocks and baskets



are engaged on the task of damming the Karnafuli and constructing East Pakistan's first hydro-electric power station. The power generated will be transmitted to Chittagong and beyond to drive machinery in new industries. The hill people, especially the Chakmas who live in the neighbourhood of Rangamati, are not looking forward cheerfully to the completion of the Karnafuli Dam, for it will pond back a lake 250 square miles in extent, flooding most of the best agricultural land within the Hill Tracts. The small town of Rangamati itself will be partly inundated. The concern shown by the Chakmas will be better appreciated when you consider how they obtain their livelihood.

The traditional type of agriculture among all the peoples of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is *jhum*, which is a form of what is generally called "shifting agriculture." In brief, *jhum* cultivation involves the clearing and burning of the bamboo and tall grasses covering slopes and the growing of a mixture of crops on the cleared patch for a

*Bamboo jungle higher up the slope is being cut to make the temporary fields of jhum cultivators.*







*This jhum field has been abandoned after giving a year's production of mixed crops. The hut was occupied by the cultivator while he tended his field. Bamboo jungle will soon cover the whole slope.*

single year. Afterwards the bamboo jungle is allowed to grow again. Another way of describing jhum is to call it a system of "bush fallowing," in which for *one* year of cropping, the land has to lie idle under a cover of jungle for *three* years or more. The only tool used by the jhum cultivator is his *dao*, a flat-bladed, blunt-ended knife sharpened on one edge (you can see one in the foreground on page 48). The sharp edge is used for cutting bamboo and small trees, while the eighteen-inch blade can be used also as a kind of dibble-stick or planting tool, being jabbed into the ashy soil to make a hole in which to plant the seeds. Generally a number of seeds are placed in the same hole—hill rice, cotton, beans, maize, gourds, etc. This ensures that the soil on the hill slope is quickly covered with a crop



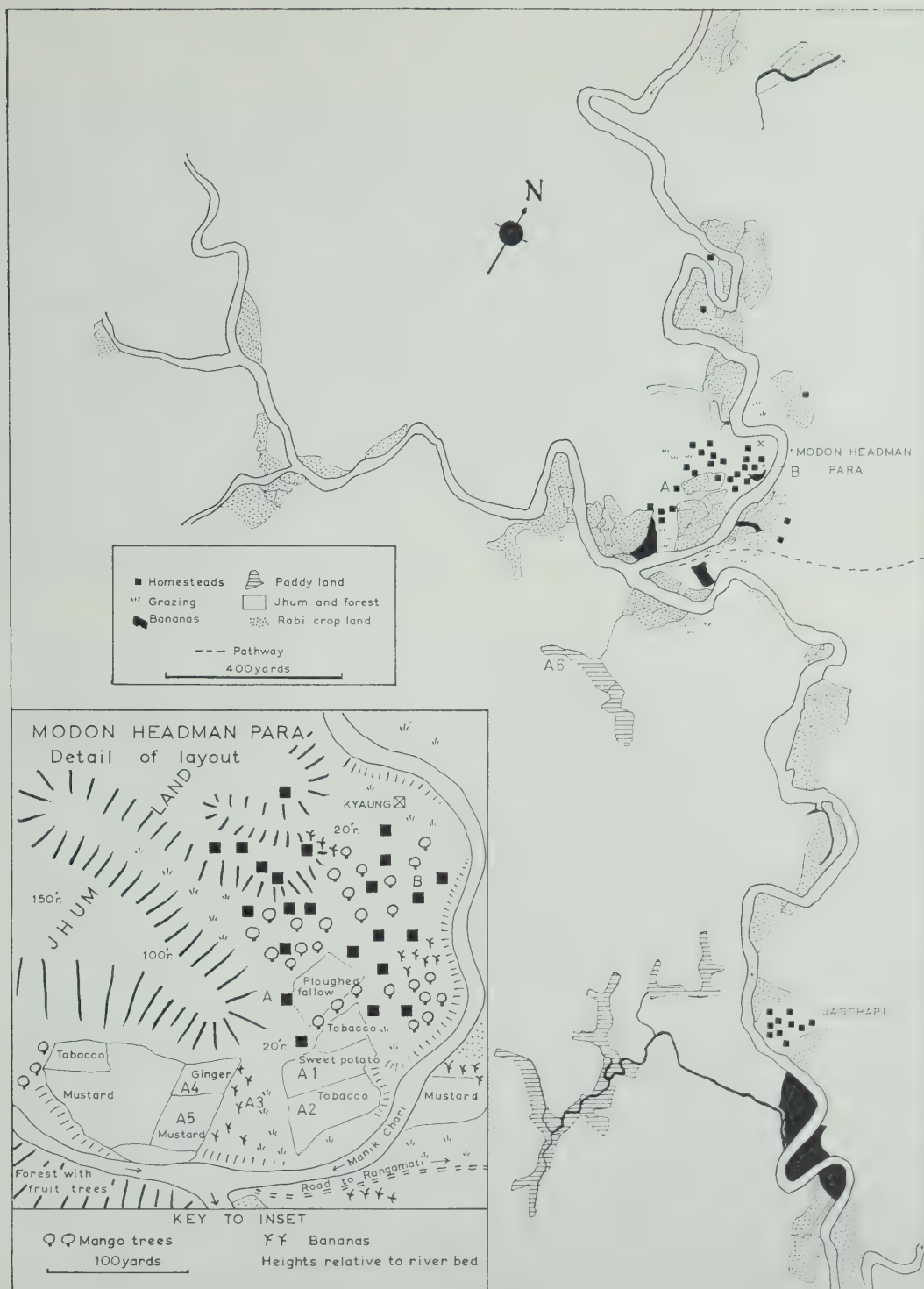


FIGURE 9. This sketch map shows where the farm land is situated in a typical part of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and the inset map shows the layout of a typical village called Modon Headman Para.

to protect it against soil erosion. It also means that whatever weather the season brings, some crop is almost certain to flourish.

The village, Modon Headman Para (named after its present headman, Chandra Modon), lies three miles south-west of Rangamati, on a small river, Manik Chari. The setting of the village and some details of its layout are shown in Figure 9. The people here belong to the Tenchaungya clan, a subdivision of the Chakma tribe, and their way of life is typical of the whole Chittagong Hill Tracts. Almost every patch of more or less flat ground is shown on the map as either paddy land or rabi crop land, and as you see there is really very little of it. Most of the land slopes quite steeply, and is covered in vegetation of one kind or another. In the dry season the sloping fields have been harvested and are allowed to go back to jungle, but

*Magh women sifting mustard seed which will later be crushed for cooking oil. The flat permanent fields where the mustard and paddy are grown can be seen in the background.*





here and there banana plants are left to fruit for a second season. Around the village big bushy mango-fruit trees shade the houses. Not all the surrounding slopes have been cleared for jhum fields. On some there are still tall forest trees, but these are becoming rare outside the Reserved Forest areas. The whole area shown white on the map looks much the same as on page 38, with some extensive slopes of bamboo jungle (page 37). What little flat land there is belongs to the wealthier villagers, like Chandra Modon the headman. His mud house with its corrugated-iron roof is the only one in the village and he had to employ Bengali plainsmen to build it. Everyone else lives in bamboo houses. Chandra Modon farms three acres of flat land in this village, and a further six acres in a village four miles to the east. His three acres at Modon Headman Para lie

*Paddy fields in the flat floor of a valley. The stream has been led along the edge of the fields and can be diverted to irrigate the crops when necessary.*



in two blocks, one just between his house (marked A on the inset) and the Manik Chari, and the other a quarter of a mile away in a tributary valley on the south side of the river. The land nearest his house is slightly sloping, and not suited to irrigated paddy, so he uses it mainly for rabi (dry season) crops, and for aus paddy and bananas. The rabi crops are shown on the inset : sweet potato, mustard seed, tobacco and ginger. On page 40 you see two tribeswomen sifting the mustard seed after threshing. Although these women belong to a different village and a different tribe (they are Maghs), they illustrate an important difference between the people of the Hill Tracts and those of the plains. As we saw in Iswarganj, most of the plainsfolk are Mohammedan by religion, and their women practise purdah and do not work outside the confines of the homestead. Among the Hill tribes it is not only customary for the women to help in the farm work, but they also go to market and are more nearly equal in status to the men. The Maghs are Buddhists like the Tenchaungya and Chakma.

In his farthest fields, on the floor of a small valley, Chandra Modon grows transplanted aman paddy. Page 41 shows the stubbly paddy fields after the harvest. You can see the little bunds that hold the water in the fields, and in the right foreground the small stream held in a ditch at the side of the valley bottom so that the water can be used to irrigate the paddy if need be. The grass-thatched hut on stilts is a lookout hut where one of the labourers spends most of his time when the crop is nearly ripe. His job is not to guard against human thieves, for the hill people are outstanding in their honesty, but to frighten off the wild game that comes out of the jungle to feed at night. Wild pigs and deer are the chief culprits, but sometimes an elephant crashes out of the forest and then there is little to be done save hope that he will not trample too much of the crop. There are tigers in the jungle also, but their interest is in the young deer and not in the field crops. Because of tigers, Chandra Modon is careful to bring all his cattle back to the village at night. He has



TABLE OF ACTIVITIES

<i>Month</i>	<i>Jhum Land</i>	<i>Flat Land</i>	<i>Village etc.</i>
JANUARY	Start cutting bamboo jungle on jhum land	Harvest of mustard	House repairs. Thatching.
FEBRUARY	Cutting bamboo on jhum	Harvest of mustard, spices, vegetables	Women collect fuel, spin, dye and weave cotton
MARCH	Burning of jhum. Constructing temporary huts	Ploughing land for aus and jute	
APRIL	Planting (with first rains)	Ploughing land for aus and jute	Festivals at end of Buddhist year
MAY	Planting	Sowing aman seedlings	
JUNE	Weeding	Ploughing aman fields	
JULY	First vegetables collected. Weeding	Aus harvest. Transplanting aman	
AUGUST	Harvest of early rice, vegetables, sesamum	Jute harvest	
SEPTEMBER	Harvest of early rice, vegetables, sesamum	Ploughing fields for rabi crops. Sowing mustard	Cutting bamboo for sale
OCTOBER	Main harvest of rice	Sowing rabi vegetables, tobacco	Cutting bamboo for sale
NOVEMBER	Harvest of sesamum and cotton	Aman harvest	Cutting bamboo for sale
DECEMBER	Harvest of sesamum and cotton. Jhum reverts to jungle	Aman harvest	



*Tenchangya house at Modon Headman Para. The women are busy weaving their own skirts from home-grown and home-spun cotton. Almost all houses in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are built on piles above ground level.*

a pair of fine water-buffaloes which do most of his ploughing, and three or four cattle as well. The seasonal rhythm on Chandra Modon's farm is much as on the lowland Bengali's farm at Iswarganj, though much less complicated. The table on page 43 shows his main activities.

There are thirty-two families in the village, but only eight of these have flat land to cultivate with the plough. The rest have a rather harder life, cultivating the jhum lands on the hillsides. Some of the families who have only a little flat land cultivate jhum as well. In the house shown above lives a typical Tenchangya family. Gopanga is the head of the family, and you see his wife Kshana, and his married daughter Nishi, weaving outside the house. His

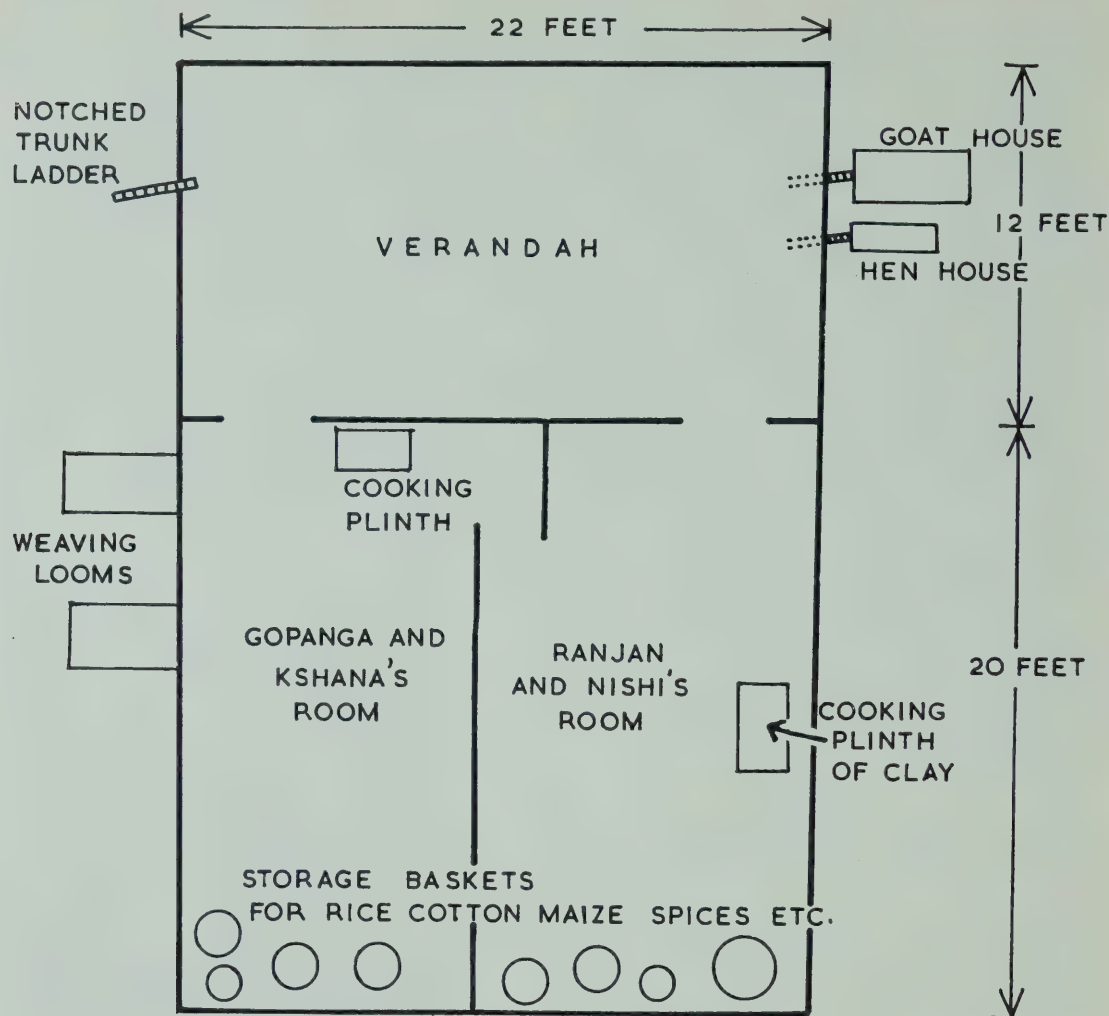


son-in-law, Ranjan, is living with Gopanga till he can afford to build a house of his own. In the table on page 43 you can see how much their activities are influenced by the climate of the seasons, which are very similar to those described in Chapter Two and illustrated in the diagram (Figure 6). At the beginning of the dry season in November or December, Gopanga and Ranjan go out into the hills to select a slope for their jhum fields. They have to find one covered with a three-year growth of bamboo and, in fact, they go to the area nearly a mile from the village where Gopanga had a field four years ago. They tell the headman, Chandra Modon, where they propose cultivating, and as no one else has selected the area it is agreed, and they pay the jhum tax of six rupees for each family. Chandra Modon has to pay most of this sum to the chief of the Chakma Circle in Rangamati, who in turn pays a proportion of his revenue to the Government.

By January the bamboo jungle is ready to cut. Gopanga, Ranjan and his wife Nishi spend the best part of three or four weeks felling bamboo. Kshana stays at home in the village to look after her small granddaughter and to prepare the evening meal for the family when it returns in the evening. The three bamboo cutters work with their *daos* till the whole slope is a mass of fallen bamboos. Each day the best poles, which may be twenty feet long, are put on one side to be carried back to the village for repairing the framework of the house, and when Nishi is tired of hacking bamboo she cuts and bundles the long jungle grass to be used for thatching. Once the jhum is cut, the menfolk have time to attend to the

*A Tenchaungya couple on their way to market.*



FIGURE 10. *Plan of Gopanga's house.*

house repairs, while the women are kept busy weaving the skirt and breastcloth that is their tribal dress. They mostly use cotton they have grown, spun and dyed themselves. Each tribe weaves its own traditional basic colour, with gay stripes of red and yellow. The men-folk no longer wear tribal dress, but buy their cotton shirts and lungis (skirts) in Rangamati market. As the weather is so warm and dry for weeks at a time during the dry season, Kshana and Nishi set up their



looms out-of-doors beside the house. On page 44 you can see the cloth shade Nishi has rigged up to shelter her from the sun. Her baby daughter is playing with a goat kid beside her. You can probably make out the structure of the house from this photograph and the plan (Figure 10). Bamboo is the main building material. If possible, they like to use stronger tree timber for the supports of the house, but bamboo is easily obtained and very easy to work with. It is a remarkably versatile material, and finds many uses among the Hill tribes. Not only is it used as poles, but split and flattened it can be woven to form "matting" floors and walls of different patterns, and is used to make various utensils, such as drinking mugs, water-carrying cylinders, tobacco pipes, weaving shuttles, musical instruments and so forth. As ours may be termed a steel civilisation, theirs could be called a bamboo civilisation, so important is the material in their lives. Even the *kyaung* that serves as the village "church" and the home of the Buddhist priest is a bamboo structure. The floors of the houses are all raised above ground level, and have a verandah. The goats and pigs sleep beneath the house at night, but the chickens have their own little house on stilts and a ladder for climbing in. You can see the notched tree-trunk ladder to the main verandah near where Nishi's baby is standing. The thatch grass often has to be renewed each year, and the rest of the house comes in for progressive replacement every three to five years. The pigs and poultry, scavenging for food around the houses, keep the village tidy.

The dry season is a good time for collecting a stock of firewood. This is mainly the women's task, and they collect more than the family need so that Gopanga can make his contribution to the village priest in the form of a bundle of wood from time to time. Other villagers look after the priest's needs for food or help repair the *kyaung*.

By the beginning of April the cut bamboo on the *jhum* is quite dry. Gopanga and Ranjan spend an exciting day setting fire to the

lower edge of their hillside, and watching the whole slope blaze like a gigantic bonfire, sending clouds of smoke into the sky. When the ashes have cooled, they set to work to build a small house in the middle of the jhum to serve as a temporary home for the family while they are busy planting, weeding and harvesting their crops. With the appearance of the first heavy rain showers in mid-April, the time has come to plant the seeds. The whole family moves from the village to the jhum, so as to waste no time in unnecessary travelling to and from the village. With their *daos* now used as dibble sticks, they make a hole in the ash-covered earth, into which they drop a mixture of seeds—"hill" rice (which needs no irrigation), cotton, sesamum (an oil seed from which cooking oil can be made), maize, beans, cucumber, melon, pumpkins, etc. Planting goes on into May, but if the rains have been good, the earliest planted part of the field will be green under a rapidly growing cover of vegetation. The beans and other vegetables come up first and form a protective cover for the loose surface soil on the slope. Then the grain plants shoot above this carpet of foliage.

Obviously the crops ripen at different times, and the family spend much of the time from July to November harvesting the various crops, and carrying them to the house in the village. Any surplus to the family's needs is taken to market at Rangamati, where the



*The blacksmith and his mate at work on a "dao" blade in Rangamati market. You can see a completed dao in the foreground.*



money obtained is soon spent on "luxuries" such as sugar and tea, personal ornaments like ear-rings, or more essential things like a new *dao* from the blacksmith or a cooking pan from the copper-smith.

As the rains slacken off in late August–September, early rice is cut, but the main crop is reaped in October, followed by the sesamum harvest in November, and cotton last in December. After the October rice is cut Gopanga and his wife go back to live in the village house, leaving Ranjan and Nishi to look after the remaining crops. Gopanga is free then to cut bamboo to sell to the agent of the Chandragona Paper Mill. He floats his little rafts of cane down the Manik Chari to the Karnafuli River, where the mill agent takes it over and Gopanga returns to cut another load.

In a good year, when the rains have come "on time" and there have been no untoward losses of crops to wild pigs or rats, the family can make quite a satisfactory living from their jhum. It provides rice and maize as the main foodstuffs, cooking oil, vegetables, and cotton for spinning and weaving cloth. Furthermore, it generally yields a sufficient surplus for sale to pay for necessities. Gopanga's bamboo sales to the paper mills bring in enough to pay the jhum tax. In a bad year of unexpected drought, for example, the family may suffer from lack of food, and it is then that the isolation of the district and the lack of alternative employment are most felt. The jhum cultivator is most seriously affected in such an event, as the family with flat land can usually irrigate their rice fields and their crops then survive the drought.

When the last cotton boll has been picked the temporary hut is abandoned. Ranjan and his wife return to the village and the jhum slope is left to regain its fertility under a fresh growth of bamboo.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A SYLHET TEA GARDEN

### *Deanston's Tea Estate*

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ONE of the best times to visit a tea garden is at Christmas, for then the climate is most pleasant. The days are brilliantly clear, warm and dry, while the nights are enjoyably cool and one is glad to see a fire in the grate. In December, too, there is plenty to see on the garden; tea picking is nearly over for the season, but everyone seems busy pruning the old bushes, planting the new and generally tidying the gardens and repairing the buildings of the estate.

Leaving the capital of East Pakistan—Dacca—on the midnight train, you arrive at Srimangal with the dawn, soon after six o'clock. It is a little railway station with a siding and goods shed where the tea chests are loaded into closed railway wagons for their 180-mile journey to the port of Chittagong. From the station to Deanston's Tea Estate is a seven-mile drive, all the way through tea gardens. The first thing that strikes you is that the gardens look like a vast orchard of flat-topped trees, planted to protect the tea bushes from the direct rays of the sun. The tea bushes are allowed to grow to a height of about three feet. They are so closely planted and so regularly picked to this level, that from any slight rise you look across a smooth, unbroken surface of tea beneath the avenues of shade trees.

Here and there along the road you pass little groups of gaily chattering girls and women, led usually by a man with a book under



his arm. These are the working parties under their foreman on their way to the day's task of picking or pruning, with their baskets on their shoulders. Then through the trees you see a silvery painted smoking chimney rising above a number of red-roofed factory buildings—the tea factory where the fresh-picked tea leaves have to be processed and packed ready for export. The lower whitewashed buildings with thatched roofs across the road from the factory are the office and the “planter's” or manager's bungalow. On the verandah, the manager and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Murchie, are waiting to begin their breakfast. The working day starts early for them both, and Mr. Murchie has already spent an hour or more in the office, for this is the coolest part of the day.

Mr. Murchie has planned a tour of the gardens, but first you are taken to his office to see a map of the whole Srimangal Valley. You may not be able to find Srimangal on an atlas, but you should be able to trace the railway line running north from Chittagong, skirting the Ganges Delta to the west and running at the foot of the low but rugged hills of Tripura State on the east and south. Srimangal lies where parallel ridges of these hills drop to the low swampy plains of Sylhet. The lowest part of the valley contains the shallow lake of Hail Haor which is surrounded by a belt of rice fields. It is only on higher, better-drained land along the edges of the hill ridges that tea can be grown, but the low, flat ground is ideal for rice growing. The rice farmers seek out the slight rises in the land for their villages, in order to keep above the deep floods of the rainy season.

An almost continuous belt of tea gardens runs along the hill-foot, but extends only a little way into the hills, which are mostly covered with jungle of tall bamboo and scattered trees. Deanston's Tea Estate includes a strip of this jungle, the home of tigers, leopards and bands of noisy monkeys, but a useful source of bamboo, thatching grasses and firewood. From the foot of the steep slope of the hills the ground slopes gently towards the floor of the main valley, and its relatively smooth surface is broken only by a few small

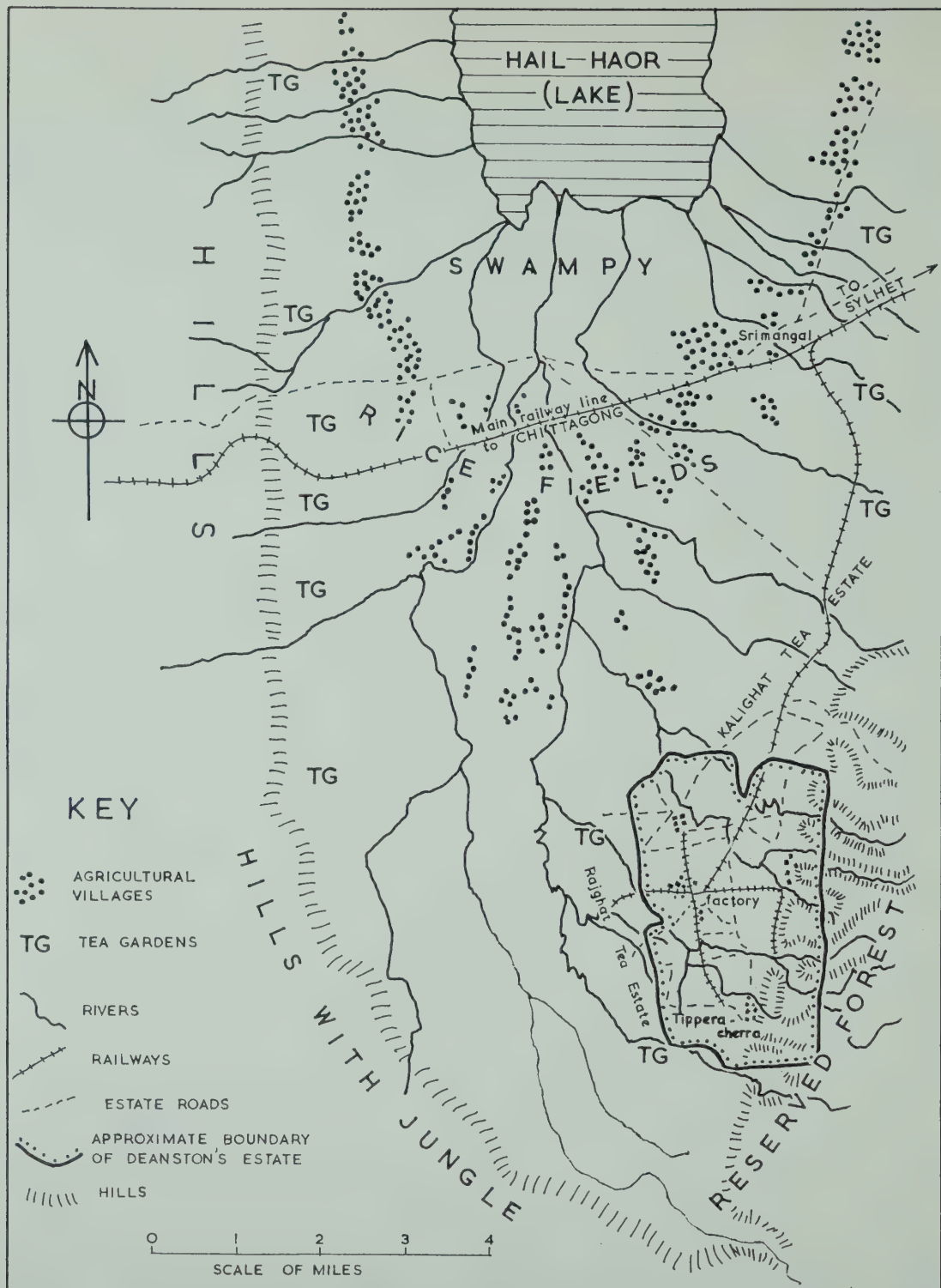


FIGURE 11. *The location of Deanston's Tea Estate.*



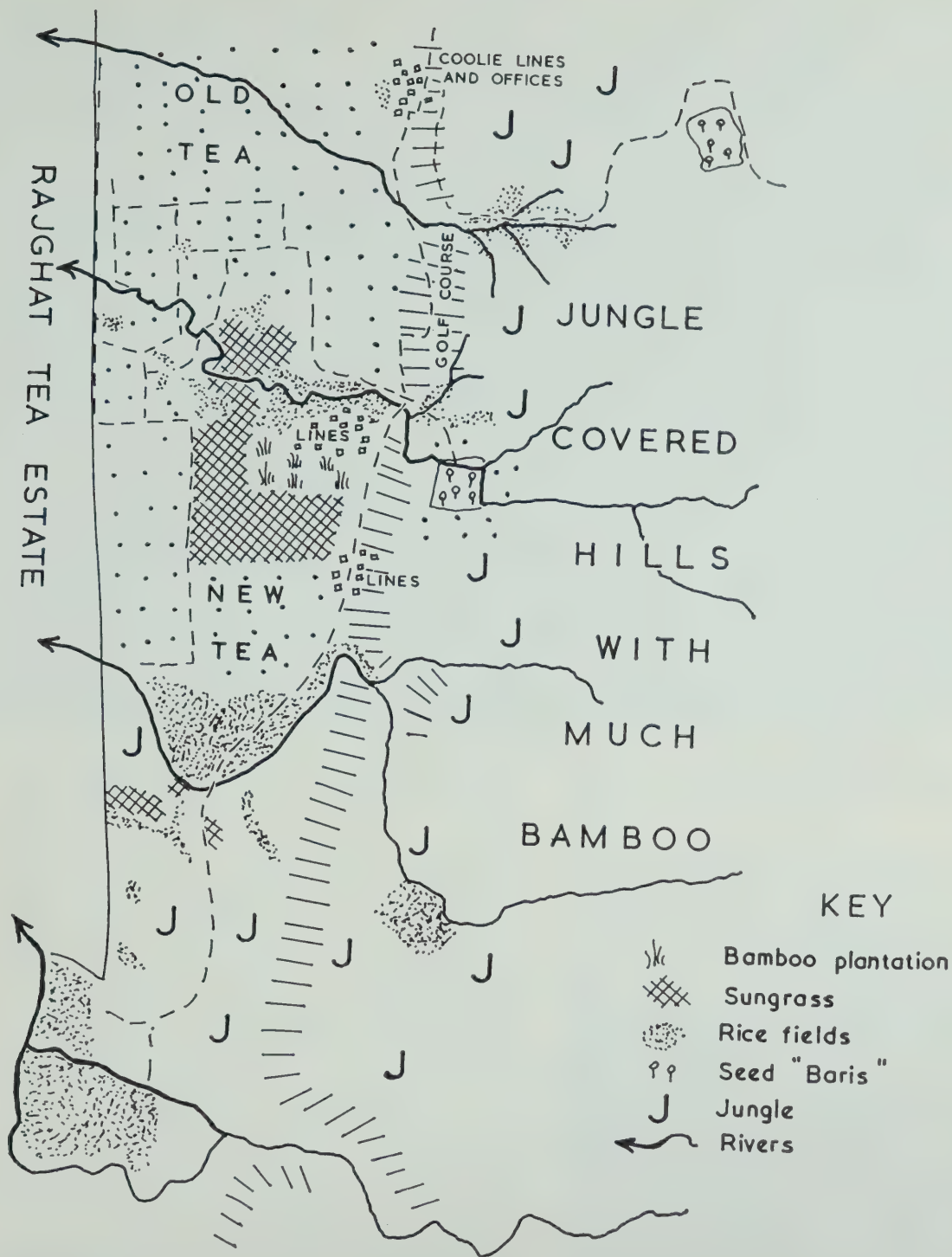


FIGURE 12. Tipperacherra Tea Garden (southern part of Deanston's Tea Estate).

streams which have cut their courses perhaps twenty feet below the sloping plain. This is a great advantage, as the streams can drain away the surface water from the tea gardens and so prevent water-logging which is fatal to the tea plant. Deanston's is about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles long (from north to south) and 2 miles wide. To its west is Rajghat Estate, the biggest in Pakistan and probably in the world, while to the north-east lies Kalighat Estate, and then a string of gardens continuing along the edge of the hills past Srimangal and the railway line. Practically all the tea grown in Pakistan comes from this hill-foot belt of southern Sylhet, and it forms an important export for the country, second only to jute in value and weight.

If you drive in Mr. Murchie's jeep out to the hilly land you can get a good view over the estate, which is by no means all covered with tea bushes. Deanston's consists of four gardens, each with its manager, and all of them sending leaf to the central factory. The most southerly garden is Tipperacherra, where the best viewpoint is (see Figure 11). Here and there in the jungle can be seen clearings with tall dark green shrubs the size and colour of large holly bushes.

*A tray full of seedlings. Newly planted tea is seen behind.*



These are the "seed baris" or gardens, where the tea bushes are allowed to grow to their full size unpicked and unpruned. The bushes flower each year and produce seeds as big as marbles which have to be collected and sorted before being planted out in seed beds. These can be recognised by the bamboo framework which is put up to support the long sun-grass that is used to keep the strong sun off the young seedlings. Special fields of sun-grass are cultivated as it is needed for thatching as well.

Beyond the workers' village, or





*Women pruning tea bushes at the end of the picking season—i.e. the beginning of the dry season. The bushes are cut down to an even level about 3 feet above the ground. Young tea shoots up from this level.*

“coolie lines,” nestling neatly at the foot of the hill, can be seen a new plot of tea being planted out. A fast-growing cover crop has been planted to provide a temporary shade for the newly transplanted seedling tea which is being closely spaced in rows so that not a square foot of ground is wasted. The new tea is next to a block of old tea where the women are pruning to bring the bushes down to a level three feet above the ground. When wet weather comes again the young shoots will rise from this level to be plucked at regular intervals. The next block of tea is still being plucked, probably for the last time this season, now that the rains have ended. All the tea grows best in the shade, and great care is taken to plant trees with widespreading branches to protect the tea bushes from the sun.





*A well-kept tea garden has an unending surface of closely packed tea bushes beneath a cover of shade trees. Plucking of the tea regularly keeps the level about waist high.*

Along the streams wherever there is a little flat land, there are patches of rice stubble. Such low wet land is unsuited to tea, and is rented out to the garden workers for rice growing in their spare time.

At various corners in the rectangular network of roads and paths through the tea, groups of women have collected to have their baskets of leaf weighed and checked by the foreman. The tea leaf



*The first operation when tea leaves come into the factory is to spread them on shelves in this "withering shed" where the plucked shoots lose some of their moisture.*

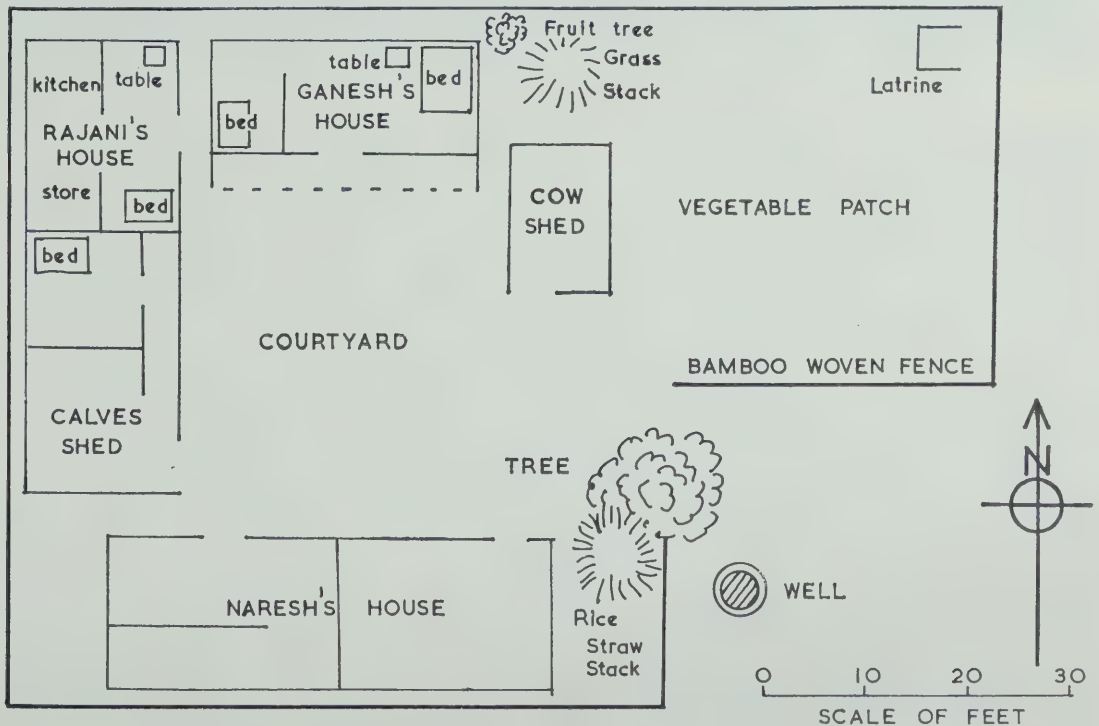


is then loaded on to trucks on the light railway, to be pushed down the gentle slope to the factory.

At the factory you would find a great buzz of activity, and all the machinery running. Among the most important of the workers here is Ganesh, the chief fitter in the diesel-generator shop that provides power for all the machines that process the tea. As he is the head of a large family, all of whom are employed on the tea garden at one job or another, we shall get a good idea of the life and work of the garden by seeing what each member of this family is doing.

But first let us take a look at the surroundings in which they live, starting with the "compound" of the joint family and Ganesh's house. The plan (Figure 13) and photograph show his neat little hut standing on one side of the mud-plastered courtyard. The roof

FIGURE 13. *Plan of Ganesh's compound in the coolie lines on Deanston's Tea Estate.*

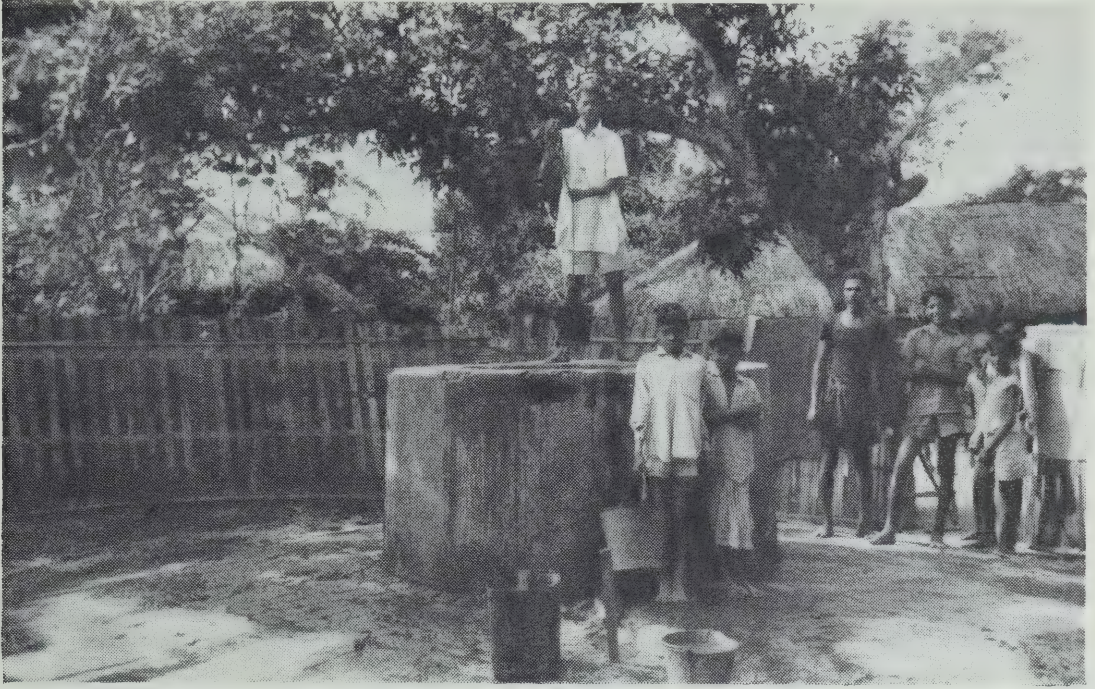




*Ganesh outside his house, which the tea estate keeps in good repair.*

has been newly thatched, the walls are of plastered bamboo matting, and the whole stands on a slight plinth or platform which prevents the rain water flooding in during the very heavy storms. Cotton quilts are airing in the sunshine. Inside the hut a bamboo partition five feet high divides the room, part of which is used by one son and his wife. Ganesh's bed has a mosquito net draped above it, and beside it stands a small wooden table and chair, the only other furniture. Ten yards from Ganesh's house, across the square courtyard, is a similar hut where Naresh lives and a third building forms the side of the court. This hut has been extended to make a stall for the young calves at one end. The five cows have a shed to themselves near the entrance to the compound. All round the compound is a four-foot bamboo fence, which also encloses a vegetable patch ten yards square and a stack of rice straw for cattle fodder.





*Mohan drawing water from the well outside Ganesh's compound.*

In the photograph you see Ganesh with his wife and two of his grandchildren. Ganesh wears a shirt and a loose loin-cloth, or "dhoti," his wife a cotton sari. Above you see the well just outside the compound, with Mohan drawing water from twenty-five feet down. Like most of the younger men on the estate he prefers to wear shorts, as being more up-to-date.

The map (Figure 14) shows the layout of the tea factory and the workers' village with Ganesh's compound marked. Near-by is the covered market-place where the Thursday market is held when it is raining, and also an open market-place, which you see in the picture (page 61) with the little hospital behind. The concrete plinths are used by the people who bring goods to sell. Opposite stands another public place, the dance hall, with a whitewashed shed behind, in which are stored the Hindu idols which are paraded on

# DEANSTON'S TEA GARDEN: LAYOUT OF FACTORY ETC.

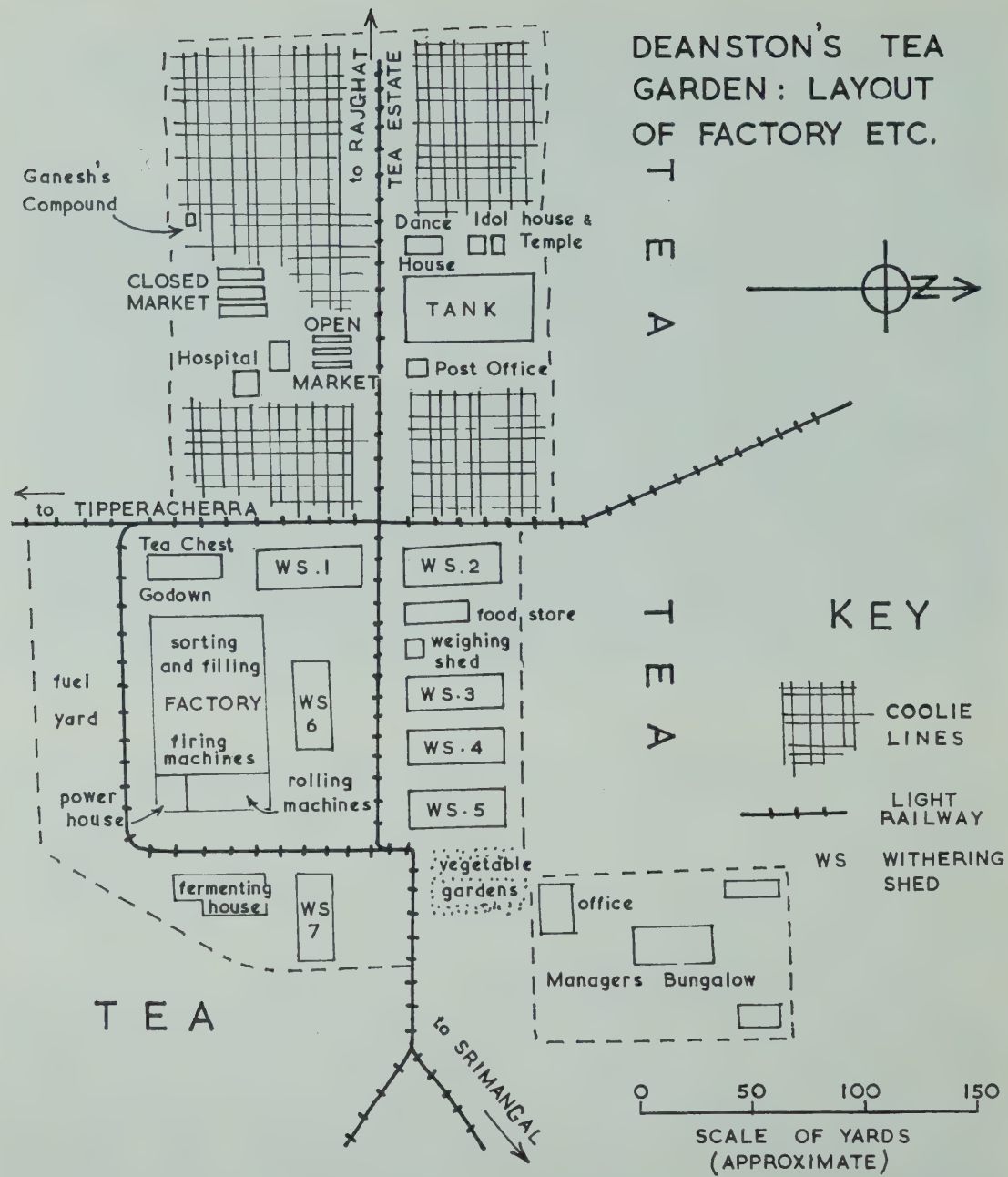


FIGURE 14.

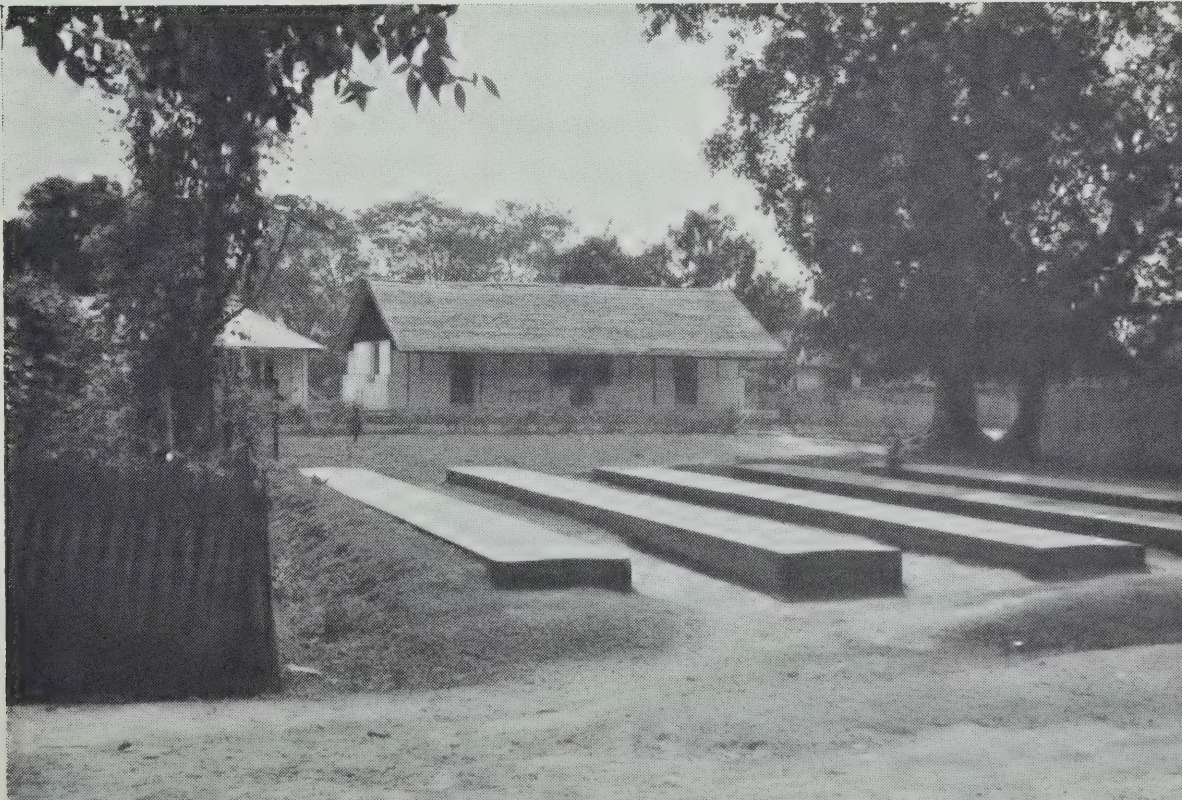


festive occasions. The tank lies near by, and next to it the tiny post office.

If we walk past the tank and the post office we follow a road and a light railway track past workers' compounds and into the factory area, where more railways converge, bringing in tea on trollies from outlying sections of the garden. Before the tea is taken to the withering sheds it is weighed in a hut. From the withering sheds it goes to the rolling machines at one end of the main factory building, and then to the near-by fermenting house, after which it re-enters the factory to be fired and sorted. Near the rolling machine shop is the power house where Ganesh spends most of his time, and at the other end of the factory is the separate tea chest "godown" in which Rajani works.

At sixty years old, Ganesh is considered quite an old man on the tea gardens. He grew up with the tea industry, for he was born soon after his parents moved from Midnapore in West Bengal to settle as workers on the new tea gardens in Sylhet District of what

*The market place with the hospital behind.*



was then the Province of Assam in British India. Since British India was divided in 1947 into India and Pakistan, Sylhet has been in East Pakistan. The tea gardens were planted here because there was plenty of well-drained unoccupied land in the valleys and on the lower slopes of the hills. This land could be rented from the Government. At this time there were not many people here, and those that were happened to be Muslims for the most part. In British India the two main religious groups were the Hindus and the Muslims or Moham-medans. Their beliefs are very different and there have been frequent riots and other troubles in the past because of their rivalry and lack of understanding. The division of British India was made very largely on the distribution of the two religious groups. The important point as far as the tea gardens were concerned was that the Muslims did not (and still do not) like their womenfolk to show their faces in public. Most of the tea is plucked by women and girls who do this work better than men, and so the Muslims were not attracted to the tea gardens.

The managers of the gardens with the help of the Government of India brought non-Muslim (mainly Hindu) families from West Bengal and Bihar. The result of this immigration over the last fifty years, together with the natural increase of the Hindus, is that two-thirds of the population of Srimangal is now Hindu. On the tea gardens the proportion is higher still; more than ten out of eleven are Hindu.

Ganesh, then, is a Hindu, one of about 4,000 employed on Deanston's Tea Estate. He and his three sons, Naresh, Rajani and Mohan, with their wives and families live and work on the estate. All the womenfolk in the family are top-grade tea-pickers and pruners. They work in "dafars" or groups of 80-120 women under one or two foremen. Tea picking begins in March or April and continues right through the rainy season until about December. By this time drought has reduced the sprouting of the young leaves so that the yield of tea is not worth the cost of picking. When this happens,



the women are employed pruning the tea bushes with knives. They may not be employed all day or every day, but the women's contribution to the family income is often as great as that of the men.

The garden is divided up into sections in each of which the tea is of the same age. How often the pickers visit each section depends on the rate of growth of the young tea shoots. A mature bush may be plucked every seven days at the peak of its production. As the temperature is never so low as to stop the plants growing, it is the rainfall that is the most important factor affecting the yield of tea from the garden. The table below shows this very well.

	<i>Rainfall in inches</i>	<i>Production in maunds</i>
January	0.25	—
February	0.99	—
March	4.01	245
April	8.78	943
May	15.68	1,768
June	18.39	2,905
July	13.69	3,799
August	12.72	3,996
September	10.95	4,246
October	9.63	4,087
November	3.23	3,125
December	0.07	1,456
	<hr/> 98.39 <hr/>	<hr/> 26,570 <hr/>

(A maund is about 82 pounds.) Of course it takes some time for the rainfall to have its effect on growth, so that the periods of maximum rainfall do not coincide exactly with those of maximum production. These come a few weeks later. The deep soil holds

water for several weeks and the tea plants' long roots draw it up for leaf growth for a while even after the rains have ended. You will see that the table shows a typical monsoon rainfall. The total of nearly 100 inches is large, but it is very unevenly distributed throughout the year. Three months have less than one inch of rain on average, and in the winter 1955-56 there was no rain at all in October, November, December and February. The unusually early drought that season meant that picking had to stop in September. That year's output was reduced to three-quarters of the normal.

The rain during March and April, although not as much as that falling in the monsoon season (May to September), can be more damaging and, for brief periods, more severe. Now and then thunderstorms bring devastating falls of hail, stripping leaves from the bushes and setting back the start of the picking season. During the heaviest rains work comes to a standstill sometimes for a day or two, though generally a few days of fine though sticky weather occur between rainy periods, and the women are ready with their picking baskets to take advantage of such fair breaks in the weather.

Ganesh's daughters-in-law helped by the young girls pluck twice a day when picking is at its height; in the morning from nine to midday, and from two to five in the afternoon. Wearing baskets resting on their backs and held by a head-band, they move among the tea bushes plucking the fresh-grown shoots from the top of the plants and tossing them over their shoulders into the basket. From time to time as the basket fills it is emptied into a bigger one, in which, at the end of each shift, their "pluck" is weighed and recorded. They are paid according to how much they have plucked.

At the factory other workers take over, unloading the leaf and spreading it out on racks in the withering sheds. These are three-storied buildings open to the fresh air but protected from the rain. Withering means that the leaves begin to lose moisture. They go limp and lose their natural glossiness. After twelve to twenty-four hours (depending on how fast the withering proceeds, which in turn





*There must be about 15 tons of tea in this picture. The women are picking chips of bamboo out of the fired tea, before it is sorted and packed into the chests in the background.*

depends on the dampness of the air) the leaf is transferred to machines which rub them together for a few hours to give them a curl. Next they are fermented in another building, by which time the tea looks a brown, soggy mess. It is then dried and “fired,” after which it is heaped up in mounds each containing several tons of tea. A group of women sit round one of the mounds picking out foreign bodies such as bits of bamboo chipped off baskets and hard twigs off the tea bushes. Sorting tea in this way is one of the light jobs on the tea estate, reserved for the elderly women or expectant mothers.

The tea here looks much like what we put in our teapots, but many of the leaves are larger and there is a good deal of fine dust. The tea has to be separated into from five to eight grades by passing it through a series of mechanical sifters. The grades vary from leaves half an inch long to fine dust. None is wasted, but each type is packed in plywood tea chests. These are lined with tin-foil to

keep out the damp and carefully labelled ready for despatch by rail to Chittagong. There the agents arrange shipment to London or elsewhere. Most of Deanston's tea finds its way to Britain. It is blended with tea from India and Ceylon to suit the tastes of the market.

Some of the tea bushes planted seventy years ago when the gardens were started are still yielding about 9 maunds per acre, but with modern methods of closer planting, fertilising with sulphate of ammonia and careful pruning much higher outputs are possible. So the old tea plants are being replaced by new. The young tea is rarely plucked until it is five years old, when it may yield 22 to 25 maunds per acre. This output may rise to 30 to 35 maunds by the time the plants are ten years old, and be kept up till they are thirty, after which the plants begin to age.

There is not always enough work for all the women in the dry season pruning the tea bushes or sorting in the factory, so another job they tackle is the planting out of the tea seedlings into their permanent growing positions. A good tea garden is constantly renewing its old tea plants as their yield of leaf falls too low. Old tea plants may be rooted up and a new garden laid out on the same land, or a new garden may be developed by clearing the jungle and preparing the ground by tractor. These preliminary heavy jobs are done by men, but women do the lighter work of sowing a temporary shade crop and later of carrying and planting out the seedling tea. The object of the tea planter is to have the greatest area covered with productive tea. The bushes are placed  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet apart in rows 4 feet apart. They are pruned in such a way that the side branches will eventually fill up the intervening spaces and produce a continuous "picking surface" about three feet above the ground.

Ganesh's three sons have a variety of jobs. Naresh, the eldest, is employed on general work outside. He cuts timber and bamboo from the hill jungles or from planted spinnies nearer to the workers' village. The bamboo, some of it thirty feet long, is a most useful



material. It is used in building the workers' houses, for making light bridges over the many drainage ditches cut through the gardens, and for making the baskets in which the women pick the tea. There are many other uses too. Much of Naresh's time is spent working with bamboo of which great quantities are required every year.

The estate provides free housing for its workers. Each family of husband, wife and children is entitled to a hut 24 feet long by 12 feet wide. The hut has a bamboo framework, a grass-thatched roof and walls of bamboo or reed matting, usually plastered with mud. The only trouble with bamboo is that although sturdy and adaptable, it is soon attacked by white ants. It is necessary to repair huts every two or three years and to rebuild them completely after five or six years.

Mohan, the second son, is also concerned for part of the year with obtaining building materials. He supervises groups of boys, who become juvenile workers at twelve years old, and progress to adult jobs at fifteen. In the dry season their main task is cutting sun-grass from the jungles or from cultivated patches. This grass grows more than eight feet tall, and is good thatching material for huts and for the temporary shelters that have to be put over the newly planted tea seeds to shade them from direct sunlight. The huts are rethatched every year in the dry season and, as this is also the time for planting tea seeds, Mohan and his gang are kept very busy. They cut grass all morning, and in the afternoon they tie the grass in neat bundles attached to either end of poles which are carried across the shoulders. Night falls quickly, with only a brief dusk, and by five o'clock the paths leading to the village and the tea factory become busy with a constant stream of work people returning home. There are boys with their shoulder poles carrying bunches of sun-grass, herdsmen driving home the combined herd of the villagers' cattle, women with their picking baskets.

Another dry-season job for the young workers is collecting tea seeds for planting in the seed beds. Generally it is thought best to

keep a “ seed bari ” of a few acres of fully grown unpruned tea bushes, in a place separated by jungle from the main tea garden. The idea is to keep the strain of tea plants as pure as possible, and free from the diseases that the plant is liable to suffer when being constantly plucked and pruned. On Deanston's Estate the seed baris lie in a secluded valley in the jungle.

In the rainy season, from about April to October, Mohan's gang work among the tea bushes, forking up the weeds round the roots, and tending the shade trees. These have sometimes to be replaced if they die of disease, as it is most important to keep a good shade cover for the tea bushes. Too much sunlight spoils the quality of the tea.

Rajani, the third son, has a more specialised job. He is foreman in charge of a dozen men making baskets and tea chests in the factory. About 30,000 tea chests have to be assembled each year. Ready-cut plywood from Scandinavia is used mostly, but there are now some factories in Pakistan, on the River Karnafuli near Chittagong, making plywood from local timber.

Ganesh spends some of his spare time cultivating a few fields of rice and rearing cattle. For very few of the workers is there any need to grow rice, for they can get good wages on the gardens, and a supply of rice at a controlled price. Many, however, like to keep a cow or two to supply their families with fresh milk. Ganesh has five small cows and two calves, which he keeps in a stall in his “ compound.” The cattle go each day with the village herds under the care of the hired herdsmen, to graze in areas set aside for the purpose by the estate. In the dry season these areas become parched, and the animals would go hungry but for the efforts of the youngsters and the women. They collect grass from the paths and roadsides, and from the banks of the streams.

The main food of the people is rice. Ganesh and his sons grow a few vegetables beside their huts, but most of what they need is bought at the weekly markets. One is held each Thursday on the



estate, but they sometimes walk three miles to the Sunday market in the next village. As well as fresh fruit and vegetables, they buy various spices for making curries at the markets. Other needs such as sugar and salt, cooking oil, cloth, paraffin for lamps and so on are bought at little shops in the workers' village.

Life in the estate village is simple. Everyone is up early, before the dawn which comes soon after 6 a.m. Breakfast is usually rice porridge sweetened with *gur* (a crude but tasty form of cane-sugar) and cooked with *ghi* (butter oil), together with sweet, milky tea. The midday snack is of tea or rice water with plenty of milk. In the evening the family have their main meal of rice with curried meat or fish, lentils and vegetables. Cooking is done out of doors in the dry season, and in a corner of the hut when it is wet. Wood is plentiful so near the jungle. The main cooking utensil is a brass

*Mohan (on the left) with some of the family, and two of Ganesh's five cows.*



*degchi* or pot. Earthenware pots are used for storage, a brass tray for serving up food, buckets for drawing water from the well outside the entrance to the compound. A few spoons, for eating puddings, and knives for preparing food are all the cutlery the family possesses, as their custom is to eat most food with their fingers. They have one or two hurricane-lamps and several simpler oil lamps. The huts are barely furnished. There is a low bed made of planks of wood, a stool or two, a wooden box for storing clothing and personal articles, perhaps a small table and chair, and cotton quilts for bedding.

After breakfast the villagers go off to their various jobs. Ganesh's family group is called in Pakistan a "joint family." The married sons continue to live in the same compound as their father, and arrange their family affairs co-operatively. Thus, when there are small children, one of the women remains at home to look after them till they are old enough to go to school. Tea-garden children are very fortunate by comparison with most in Pakistan, for the estate provides a school where two of Naresh's four sons and Rajani's boy go. There is also a hospital with a doctor in charge, and a careful watch is kept to prevent epidemics. Malaria, which is a serious fever spread by mosquitoes, used to be the cause of many deaths on the tea gardens. Recently the spraying of huts with D.D.T. and the use of better medicines has reduced the danger from this disease.

Schooling and medicine are free on the estate, which also provides sick pay when workers are ill, and special benefits for mothers having babies.

Before leaving for the gardens, the women hang the bedding over bamboo poles, and sweep out the huts. There is not much washing-up to be done ! Now and then, however, the mud plaster of the walls needs repairing, and the women take great pride in keeping the walls and floors tidily plastered.

At midday Ganesh and Rajani (who work in the factory) and



the womenfolk come home for an hour or two. They usually "bathe," either under the pump just outside the compound, or in the big excavated pond or "tank" as it is called, in the centre of the village. Although by our standards they are very poor and have few possessions, they are scrupulously clean, and bath themselves at least once a day, at the same time washing and changing their clothing. The estate looks after their health, and you can see for yourself what a thriving lot Ganesh's grandchildren are.

The evening is the time for relaxation, though there is little time left after the main meal of the day is prepared and eaten. Except at festivals the family go early to bed to save oil, and to be ready to rise before dawn next day.

Their main recreation comes on Sunday. This is a general holiday on the estate, except for the factory workers who take Monday off. (The factory has to go on working a day later than the pickers in order to process the crop.) There are occasional Hindu festivals which are great social occasions, with dancing and feasting.

Hindus are divided into "castes," and each person belongs to his father's caste. There are a great number of these, and the custom is for people to marry within their own caste. Ganesh and his family belong to the Tanti caste, and as there are not a great number of them at Deanston's, he had to look further afield to find wives for his sons. The girls come from neighbouring tea gardens. In the dry season, when picking has stopped and the factory closes down, families sometimes spend Sunday walking ten miles or more to take their children to visit relations and friends.

As a senior tea-garden worker in a post of some responsibility, Ganesh is a respected member of his caste. He is one of its "committee of elders," which deals with family disputes over property and matrimonial affairs. In difficult cases appeal may be made to Mr. Murchie, the tea-garden manager, but on the whole there is little trouble. Law and order is kept by the Pakistan police station at Srimangal. The tea-garden workers are sober, law-abiding folk,

however, and most troubles arise from strangers coming in from outside.

None the less, Mr. Murchie has a heavy load of responsibility. He lives very much on top of his job, in an airy, thatched bungalow close to the estate office alongside the factory. Like so many of the tea planters in Sylhet Mr. Murchie is a Scotsman, and the company for which he works was founded in Scotland. Two of his four assistant managers are Scots, and two Pakistanis. The success of the gardens depends very largely on the careful supervision of the trained labour force, for the tea industry is highly competitive, and an estate must be run with as little waste as possible if a profit is to be made. The manager must not only make sure that the gardens and factory are running properly from day to day, but he has to know precisely the yield from each section, and be able to decide at what stage fertiliser should be applied, when and how much pruning should be carried out, and when a section has become uneconomic and must be replaced. He has therefore to have his mind on the long-term prosperity of the garden as well as on its efficient daily running. Most of the problems with which he has to deal have to be solved on the spot and here it is his many years' experience that count. Mrs. Murchie organises the life in the bungalow with the help of several servants, but this does not make up for the separation the family has to suffer. Because of the climate and lack of suitable local schools for British children, the Murchies' little girl is at school in Shillong, 150 miles away up on a cool plateau, while their son has been at a boarding school in Scotland since he was ten years old.

This picture of life on a tea garden could be repeated many times over in neighbouring estates in Sylhet, in the adjoining Indian State of Assam, in the hills of South India and in Ceylon. The details would be different, but the general pattern would be the same. There would be a great number of labouring families whose lives are completely taken up with work on the tea gardens and for whom there is hardly any alternative in sight. Most families have been



brought to the areas where they work and live, fifty or seventy-five years ago. There will be a very small group of managers, most of them British, but many of whom are being replaced on retirement by trained men of local origin. In the past the tea industry was established on capital provided by British companies to produce tea for export to Britain and other countries. The export of tea is still the main purpose of the gardens, but year by year the control of the capital invested, and the management of the estate is passing more and more into the hands of businessmen of the countries concerned.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LIFE IN DACCA

#### *Dr. Huq and his Family*

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It is in the cities of East Pakistan, particularly in the capital, Dacca, and in the busy port of Chittagong that you would notice the greatest contrast in ways of life. For here a Bengali peasant (like Ghulam Mohammed in Chapter Two) displaced from his homestead by flood or by sheer pressure of population, and driven to seek work in the town, comes face to face with many features of "western" civilisation that he has never seen before. He sees in the main streets great buildings of Government Departments, the University Colleges, hospitals and, most marvellous of all, shops with windows full of strange goods such as cameras, tinned foods, books, fine clothing and machinery that have had no place in the life he has known. Buses, motor-cars and cycle-rickshaws make the streets noisy, and at first fearsome places, for up till now his way of transport has been on foot or by sailing boat, and he may have seen a train only rarely.

The fortunes of Dacca as a city have fluctuated from time to time, depending on its political status. River communications are still very vital to East Pakistan, and until about 1890, when the first railways were operating, a good site on a navigable river was of first importance to a town. Most of Dacca stands on a stretch of level but slightly raised land, washed on the south by the Burhi Ganga River. This raised platform stands above the limits of present



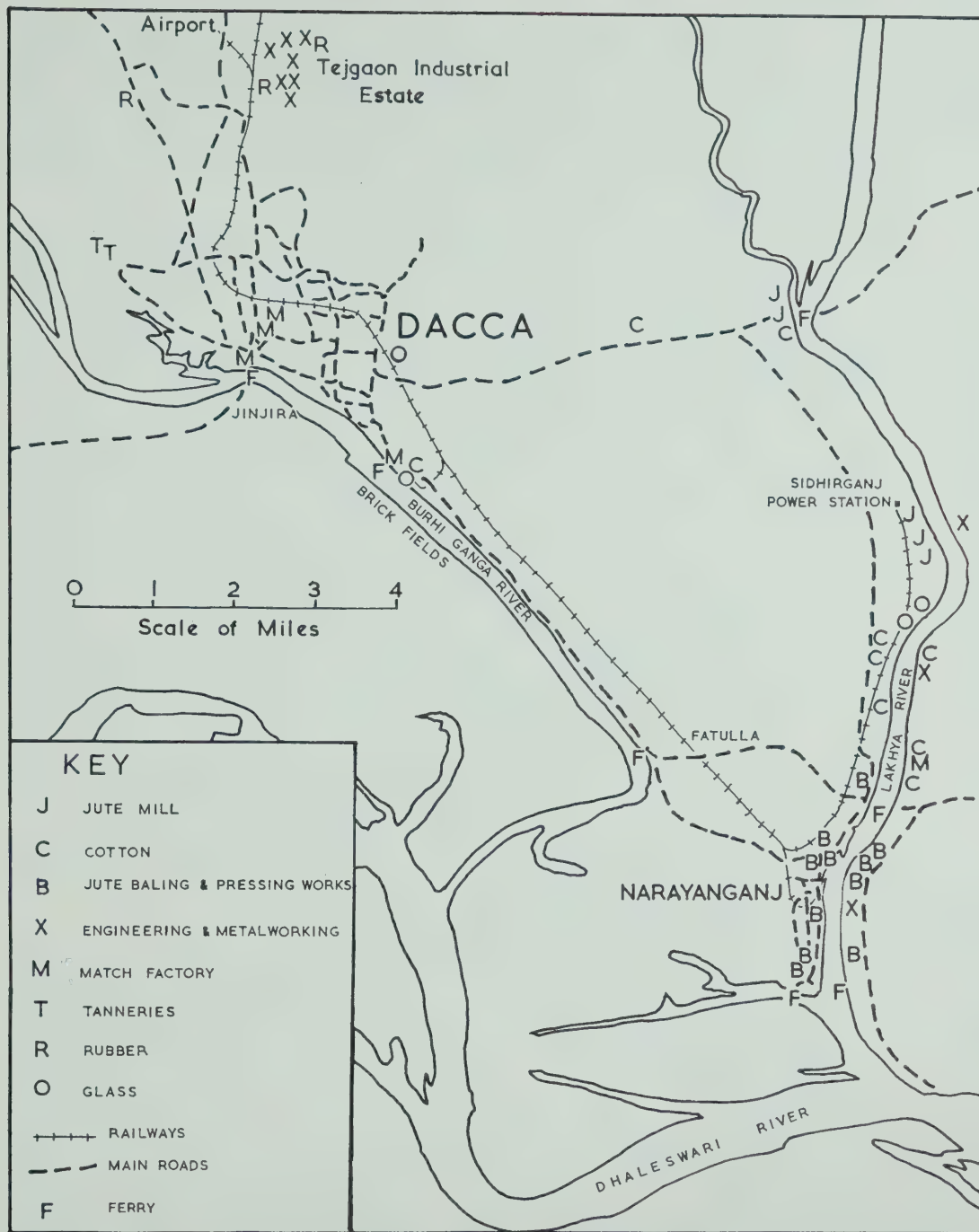


FIGURE 15. The area around Dacca and Narayanganj, showing the main industries.

river floods. The maps (Figures 15 and 16) show how conveniently placed Dacca is for river transport, while at the same time it is safe from the changing courses of the Meghna and Ganges Rivers. More than one historic city that once stood on the banks of these great rivers has been washed away.

Dacca has been the site of a town for many centuries. It first became of some importance in 1608, when the Mughal Emperor, ruling most of India from Delhi, made Dacca the capital of his province in the Bengal deltas. The city was then a busy place for industry and trade, being particularly famous for its fine muslin cloth. You can distinguish the oldest part of the town on Figure 16. Before what we may call the Mughal period, an artificial channel had been dug round the western side of the existing town as a kind of defence, a natural channel forming the northern and eastern sides, and the Burhi Ganga the southern. Many of the local names within this area are of Hindu origin, for the original townspeople were Hindu by religion. With the coming of the Mughal rule the greater part of the population were converted to the Mohammedan religion, and the names given to localities outside the earlier centre are mainly Mohammedan. The Mughal rulers expanded the town, and some of their fine houses and mosques are still standing, for example part of Lalbagh (the red garden) which was a fortified palace. They also had a fort at Narayanganj, eight miles from Dacca, to control trade at the junction of the Burhi Ganga and Lakhya Rivers (Figure 15).

During the seventeenth century Bengal was attracting the attention of western traders. Portuguese merchants were settled in Dacca in 1616, and later in the same century there came Dutch, English, French, Armenians and Greeks. These groups had warehouses along the riverside, but they seemed to have preferred to set up their homes in healthier countryside around Tejgaon to the north of the town (Figure 16). After a long struggle the British East India Company gained supremacy throughout India. In Dacca and Narayanganj little remains of the Portuguese, Dutch and French connections save



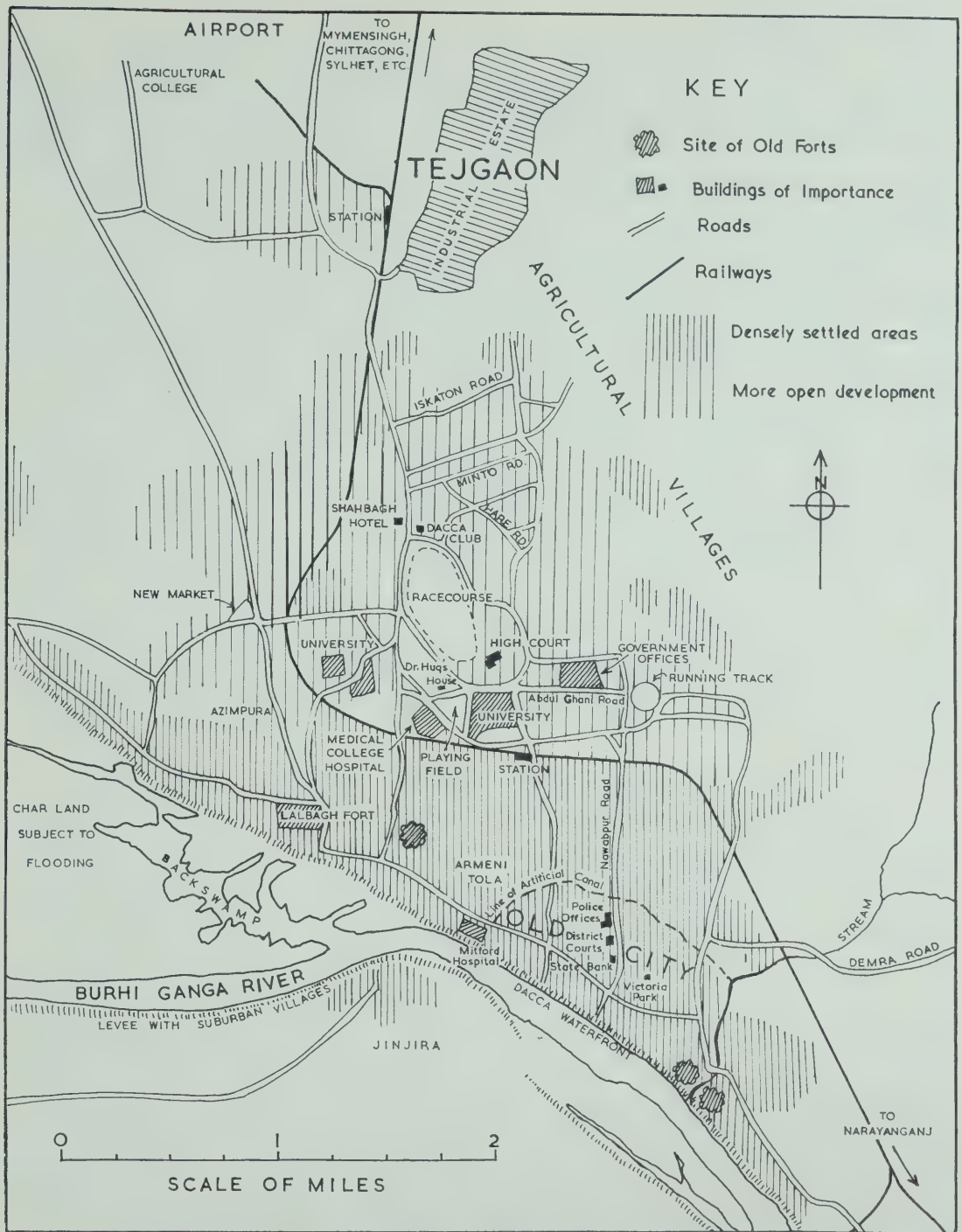


FIGURE 16. *Dacca.*

a Portuguese church in Tejgaon and a Dutchman's tombstone. The Armenians gave their name to the part of the town now known as Armenitola and their church still stands, while the Greek traders continue to flourish in the jute firm of Rally Brothers at Narayanganj.

The eighteenth century saw the rise of the British influence in Dacca, but the decline of its muslin trade in the face of competition from cheap Lancashire cottons. Indeed, for a time the trade was completely reversed and Dacca sent raw cotton to England to be manufactured there. Through the nineteenth century the city was just a district headquarters town of the Bengal Presidency, overshadowed by the capital, Calcutta. Indigo was the chief agricultural product exported for making dyes in England. About one hundred years ago, however, the trade in jute fibre became important and led to the growth of Narayanganj as a better river port than Dacca, but with close ties with the larger city. At Narayanganj, as today, raw jute was baled and loaded into big river steamers and barges to be sent to Calcutta for shipping by ocean-going vessels to Dundee especially.

For a short while, from 1905–12, Dacca became the capital of a new province of East Bengal and Assam, and although its political greatness was so short-lived, the city gained a number of large buildings, now used by the High Court and the University, and as residences of officials. Altogether, the period of British rule added much to that part of the town lying north and east of the railway line. On the map, Figure 16, you can see other evidences of the British—the race-course, the Club and the Mitford Hospital are but a few examples. The more open settlement of big bungalows in spacious gardens which line roads like Minto Road and Bayley Road are typical of the homes of the British civilian and military administrators who were to be found in every important centre throughout what is now India and Pakistan.

The year 1947 brought renewed importance to Dacca. Once



more it became a capital, this time of the province of East Pakistan, which formed the eastern part of the new state carved out of India by partition.

Dacca with Narayanganj now has a population of over 400,000. New buildings are springing up, and the city now extends to join Tejgaon in the north, though there is still open farmland on the way to Narayanganj. The latter has become the country's most important industrial centre. Figure 15 shows how the jute-baling presses and the jute mills form a nearly continuous belt along the bank of the Lakhya River. Dacca itself is developing manufacturing, particularly in the industrial estates at Tejgaon, where there are cotton textile mills, biscuit, rubber and aluminium works. When the state was first created, it had hardly any factories, but great efforts have been made to set up works in view of the urgency to provide employment for a growing population.

Its University, colleges and schools made Dacca the chief cultural centre of East Bengal even before partition in 1947. Dr. Huq, whose home we are going to look at, lectures in Economics at the University, and also has to administer Salimullah Hall where many of the men students live. He is a very busy man and lives in the large house you see on page 84. It is a fine two-storied brick building put up in 1908 when Dacca was a provincial capital. From its verandah upstairs you can look out on to the University playing fields and watch the football matches that take place in the hotter, wetter season, and the cricket that is played in the cooler but drier season. You see all the Huq family on page 80. They have visited England, where Dr. Huq studied at London University, while Mrs. Huq took a course in hospital social work. Their children are Nina (aged 16), Afreen (11) and Munir (8). While Dr. Huq and his son are wearing European clothing, his wife and daughters wear the traditional dress of the well-to-do Bengali.

All the family speak English very well, and the children in fact go to schools where all the lessons are in English, and the teachers



*The Huq family : Mrs. Huq, Munir, Dr. Huq, Nina, Afreen.*

are mostly English or American. But they can speak two other languages also: Bengali, the most widely spoken language of East Pakistan, and Urdu, the main tongue of West Pakistan.

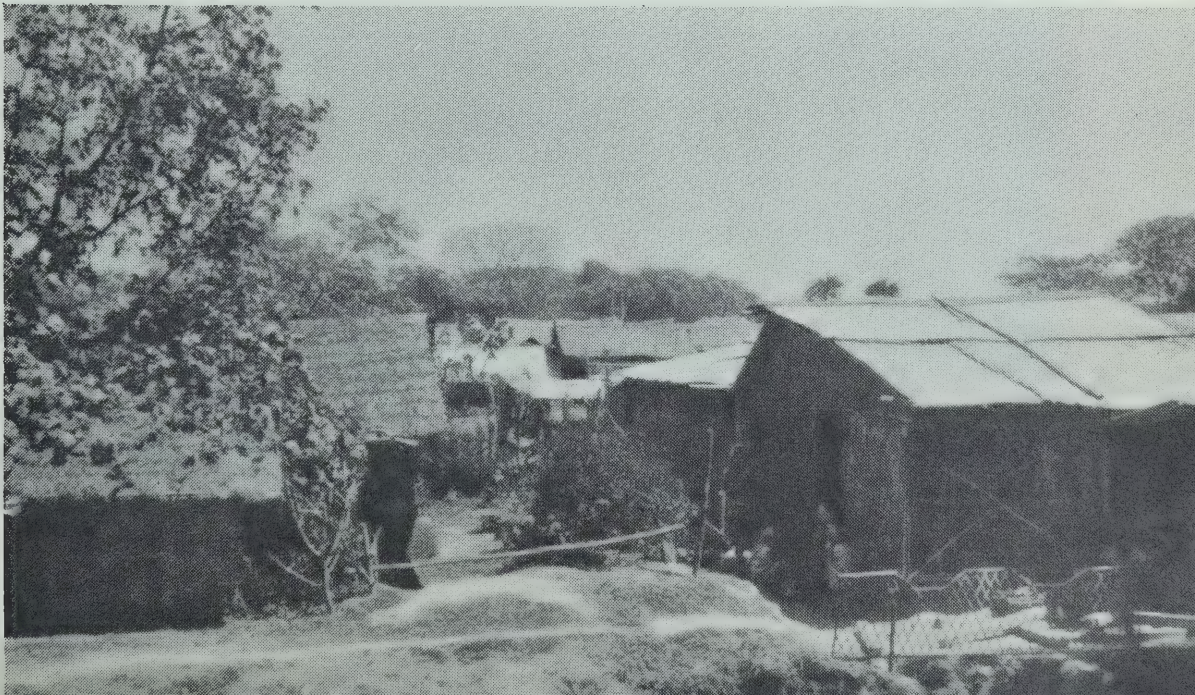
In the dry season, when the days are cooler (but never so cold that you need a fire in the house) school starts at about nine o'clock, and ends at 3 or 4 p.m. The afternoons of rainy season are so unpleasantly hot and sticky that school starts early at 8 a.m. Munir is home soon after 1 p.m., the girls by 4 p.m. Munir's school, St. Joseph's, is two miles away on the road to Tejgaon. Generally, Dr. Huq or a friend will take him and several of his friends by car, and they can usually check that they are in good time for school if on their way they see the morning plane flying in from Karachi to the airport at Tejgaon. On their way to school they pass Dacca's biggest



modern building, the splendid Shahbagh Hotel where important visitors stay. It houses many of the American officials who have come to advise Pakistan on how best to develop its economy, and who watch how the country spends the millions of dollars of aid from the U.S.A. The luxury of the Shahbagh is a great contrast with the condition in which most Bengalis live, even in Dacca. Below you see a small part of an area of bamboo huts which has sprung up to house some of the thousands who have flocked to the city in search of work. There are many similar "housing estates," and with them grow up the tiny shops like bamboo boxes on stilts. Such shops can be found immediately alongside the Shahbagh Hotel, serving the needs of servants, cycle-rickshaw boys and passers-by. When Munir has a few annas to spend, he buys sweets here on his way home from school.

Nina and Afreen go off to school in the opposite direction. They attend St. Francis Xavier Convent School, run by a Christian Mission. It lies near Victoria Park in the heart of the oldest part of the city, and to reach it they hire a cycle-rickshaw, a large tricycle with seats for two behind the man who has to pedal. You can

*Bamboo "shanty-town" in Dacca.*







*Street scene in Dacca : cycle-rickshaws, shops on the right, footpath-barber on the left.*

see a cycle-rickshaw above. Their route lies past the Gulistan Cinema, across the railway tracks near the station, and along the Nawabpur Road (see Figure 16). In the newly built area around the cinema, the shops are much as in Britain, but south of the railway crossing, Nawabpur Road becomes a typical Bengali shopping street. Several shops of a kind cluster together with their wares displayed in open-fronted stalls; here half a dozen drapers, with the colourful bales of cloth stacked on the counter, there four food shops, not full of packages and tins, but with open-mouthed sacks of rice and lentils, bundles of dried herbs and spices. Shopping is a noisy business, as it is common to bargain for a good price.

Where small side streets join Nawabpur Road, the girls have a glimpse of the overcrowded living quarters that lie behind the façade of shop fronts. Many poor people live in squalid conditions where dangerous epidemics of cholera occur from time to time, and where many suffer from malaria and dysentery. One bad source of infection



is the old canal into which all the drains run. The stench is dreadful in the dry season when the water level is low, and the city health authorities have to work hard to disinfect the houses and to spray the canal to kill malarial mosquitoes.

The Convent School stands on the fringe of the administrative and commercial heart of Dacca. Here are the banks and the offices of trading companies, police headquarters and the district courts. Beyond this lies the riverside, with its warehouses and many small jetties at which tie up the country boats that bring Dacca many of its needs (see below). When they return home from school in the dry season, the children like to play in the garden for a while, as by about 6 p.m. the sun sets, and it is soon dark. In the rainy season they prefer to have a rest after school, as the heat and the damp are very tiring. The verandah is a favourite spot to sit at all times of the year, for here they get whatever breeze may blow.

Mrs. Huq is much more busy than most Pakistan women of her class. She is a keen social worker, and spends her mornings at the

*The waterfront at Dacca. In the rainy season the river rises and the upper jetties are brought into use. Much of the city's food and firewood comes in by water transport.*







*Munir Huq in the garden. Note the deep shady verandahs on both floors.*

hospital as almoner. The rest of the day finds her supervising the servants at home, or attending various committees concerned with the welfare of women, for she is one of the small number of educated women who must do so much to help raise the standard of living and broaden the outlook of the mass of their countrywomen.

The Huqs' home is spacious and clean. You can picture its plan from Figure 17. The main differences you would notice are due chiefly to the climate—the whole design seems to allow plenty of air to circulate. There are no fireplaces, so no chimneys. Windows and doors look much alike, as they are made up of three parts: glass panes, which are seldom closed except in the coolest weather or when the house is to be left for a while; slatted wooden shutters, which let the air pass at night better than curtains; and fine wire-mesh screens to keep out flies. The family live upstairs as it is cooler there, and leave the ground floor for the servants, the guest room and



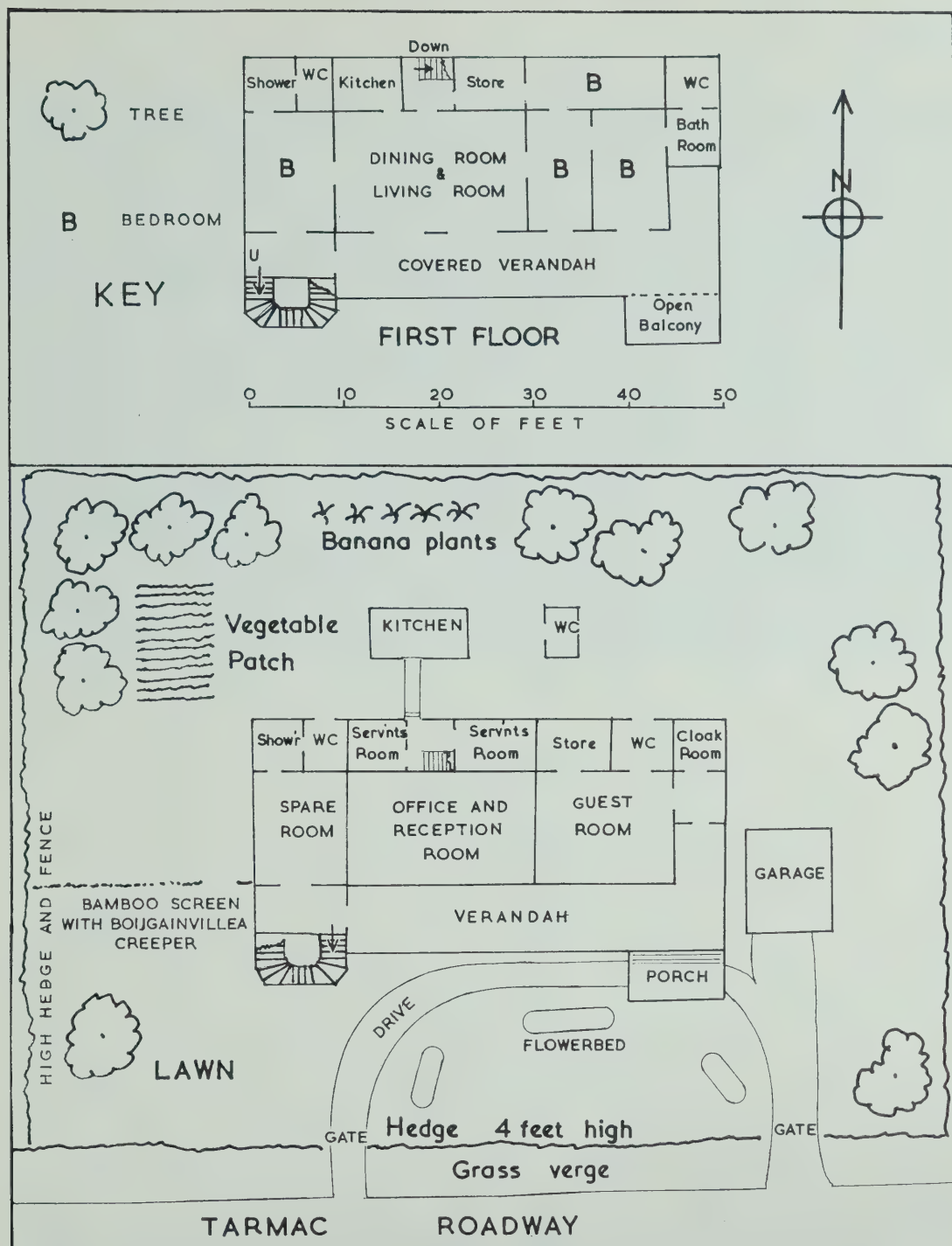


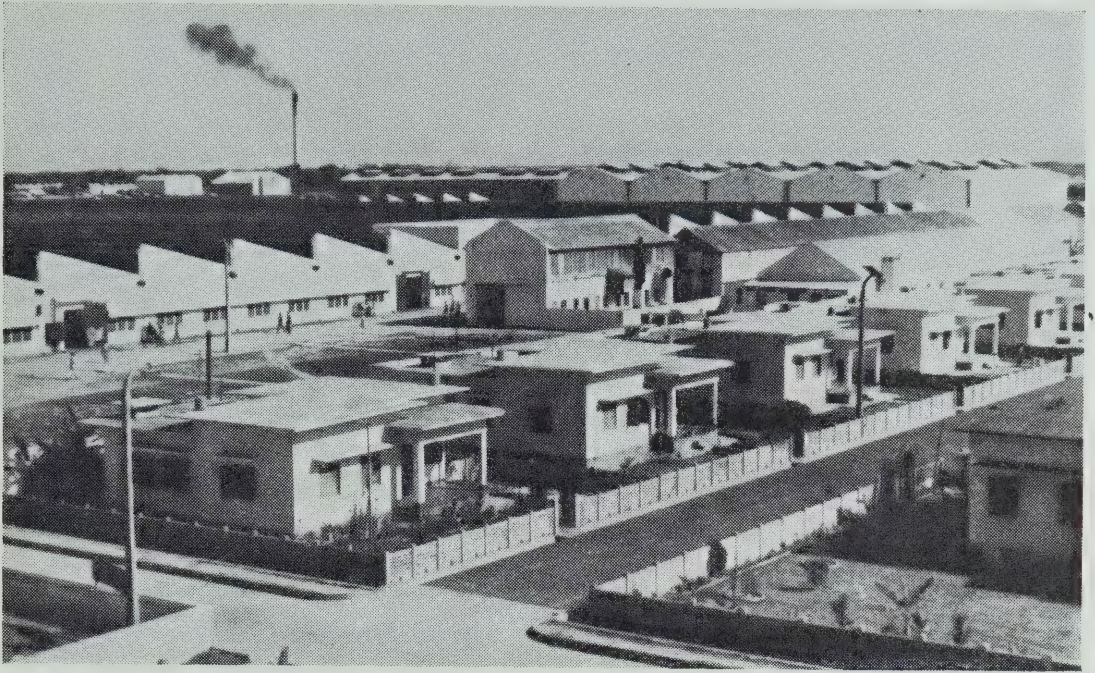
FIGURE 17. *Dr. Huq's house.*

Dr. Huq's office, where he sees his students and other visitors. Furniture is much as in a British home, the main difference being the addition of mosquito netting over beds. Large electric fans hang from every ceiling, for only the very wealthiest and modern homes have air-conditioning. There is electric lighting; but cooking is done over a wood fire in the kitchen in a separate hut and the food kept hot on a charcoal brazier in the kitchenette next to the dining-room. The cook, Fazar, has been with the Huqs for many years. She is helped by the houseboy Atikulla, while Durga is kept busy looking after the garden.

Breakfast is a light meal, consisting of bread and butter, or toast, fruit (bananas, melon, etc.) and tea. The midday meal is basically rice with curried fish or eggs, sometimes meat, and generally vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumber, followed by a light sweet such as caramel custard or fruit salad. Supper at about 7.30 p.m. is the main meal of the day. Both rice and chapattis (flat, unleavened bread freshly made in the shape of a pancake from brown flour) are prepared, and a variety of fish and meat dishes in different curry sauces. Hilsa, the most popular fish, is caught in the rivers near Narayanganj. Chicken and mutton are the most common meats used. Because of the heat and humidity, meat will not keep, and has to be eaten the day it is killed. Dr. Huq grows a few vegetables in the back garden, but his great pride is in the flower garden at the front, which is a blaze of colour during the dry season between December and February. Pink-and-mauve bougainvillea creeper cascades over the bamboo screen at the side of the house.

Munir looks forward to the week-ends when his father is free to take him out. Often there is shopping to do, such as school books and clothing to be bought. Their most convenient shopping centre is the New Market lying close to the flats in the new housing estate on the Mirpur Road, where several of Munir's friends live whose fathers are Civil Servants. Although it is quite newly built, the shops are much the same as in the older part of the town along Nawabpur





*Jute mill at Narayanganj.*

Road. None of the shops is much bigger than about 12 feet wide by 24 feet deep, and again the traders in each line are grouped together—four chemists, a dozen clothiers, six shoe-shops, and so on.

Best of all Munir likes to go for a ride with his father on a visit to a friend and one-time student who manages a jute mill at Narayanganj (see above). They drive out of Dacca due east along the Demra Road for about five miles till they come to the ferry across the Lakhya River. Traffic wanting to go further east has to cross by ferry boat here, and again and again every few miles along the road. This is the difficulty of road travel in East Pakistan. Outside the towns, there are few roads that are not impassable quagmires in the rainy season, and all are interrupted by river ferries. Munir and his father turn south along the levee of the Lakhya for a further two miles, which brings them to the jute mill. Before 1947, when Pakistan was created as a separate nation, almost all the jute that was grown in

the country was sent to Calcutta for manufacture or export. Since that date, at least five jute mills have been built along the Lakhya River above Narayanganj, as well as many jute-baling and pressing factories. Several cotton mills have also been established. The manager lives in a smart new bungalow within the jute-mill compound. From his sitting-room you can look out on to the Lakhya River and watch the boats go by. The busiest traffic is in jute coming into the baling centres by country sailing craft of all sizes up to about 300 tons cargo capacity. Jute is the vital export of East Pakistan, and earns the country foreign exchange to buy imports such as machinery and oil.

The factory employs nearly 10,000 workers and produces sacking and hessian cloth. It was built by the government-aided Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation in partnership with a private firm. The P.I.D.C. has helped set up many industries more rapidly than could have been the case without government help. Besides the navigable river by which the mills receive their raw materials, a major reason for their position here is the Sidhirganj Power Station almost next door, where diesel engines generate 10,000 kW. of electricity. These attractions have brought other mills to the neighbourhood, where until a few years ago there was nothing but rice fields. The absence of any large settlement meant that houses had to be provided for the factory workers. You can see the result on page 89, which shows the ends of nine long two-storied blocks of one-roomed back-to-back flats. The workers bathe in the big artificial tank in the foreground, and consider themselves fortunate to have a job in industry, as they might otherwise be destitute, if not homeless.

Munir is most interested in machinery, and he likes to be taken through the mills where there are row upon row of looms weaving sacking by the mile.

For a change they drive home through Narayanganj itself (Figure 15). Here is the terminus of the railway line that goes



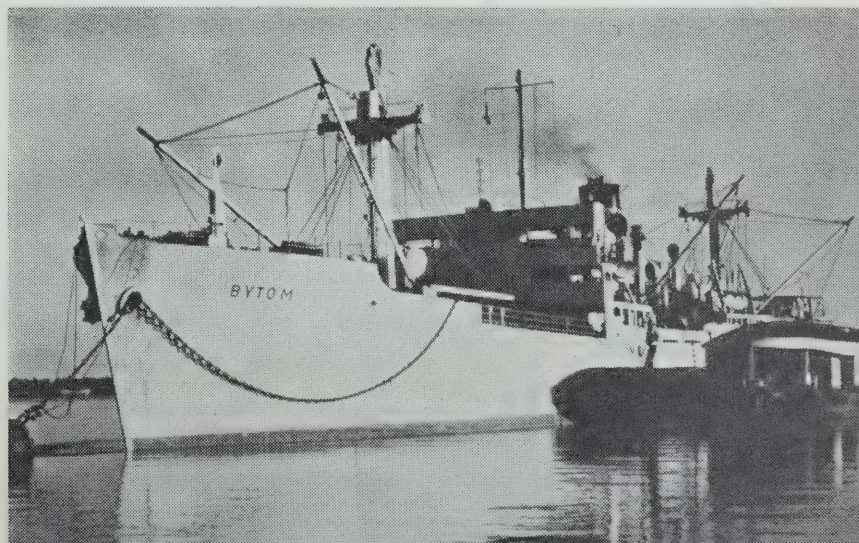


*Jute workers' housing at Narayanganj.*

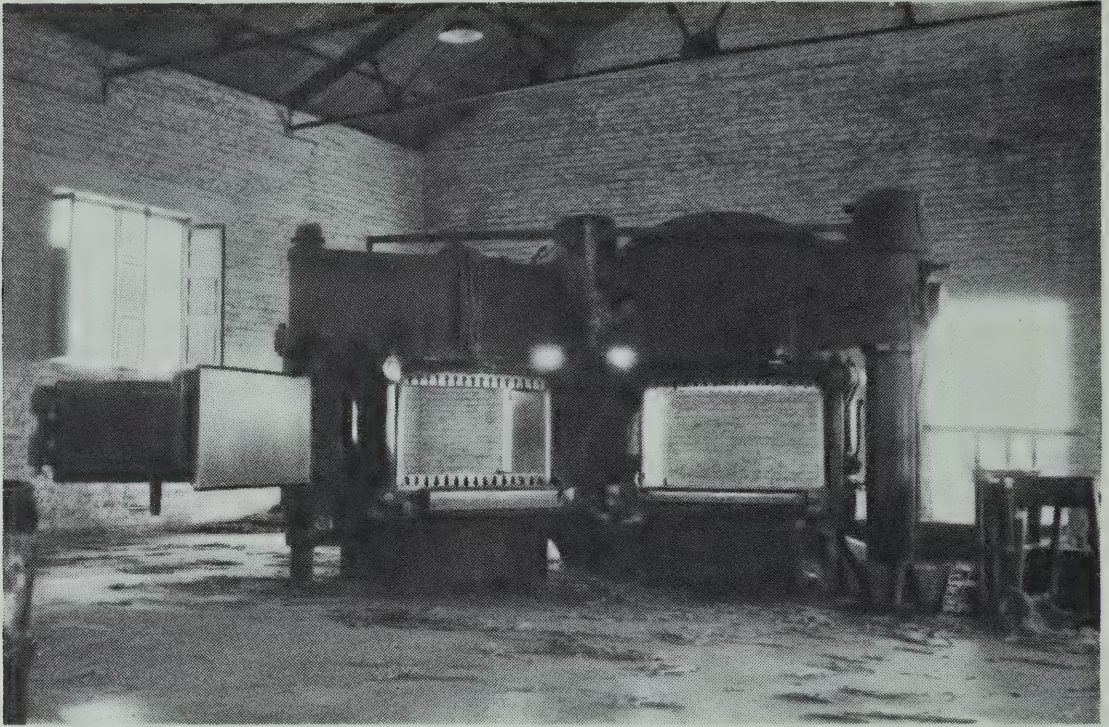
through Dacca to the port of Chittagong. The water here is kept deep enough for the covered barges to come alongside the jute-baling mills. There are thus two means of despatching the raw jute to the port and both are used to the utmost. By water the barges known as "flats" are towed to Chalna, a deep anchorage on the Passur River, seventy miles from the sea, where ocean-going steamers can take on their cargo of jute over the side (Figure 2). By rail the jute goes to the wharves at Chittagong, which also handle the export of tea and most of the country's imports.

Ghulam Mohammed, whose uncle we met farming at Iswarganj,

*A Polish steamer loading jute "over-side" at Chalna anchorage.*







*This costly press reduces the bulk of jute bales so that they take up less space in a ship's hold. As a result, the ship carries more cargo for the same cost.*

works in a jute-baling mill at Narayanganj. His job is to sort and comb the jute that has recently come in from the farmers. It has then to be baled up, compressed and tied tightly in the huge hydraulic press you see above. This press deals with 150,000 bales in a year, but its work is unevenly spaced through the year. The jute crop starts to come in from July onwards, reaching a peak about October. The factory works two or three shifts per day in September, three in October to December, slackening to two by February, and one only from March to May.

From Narayanganj the road to Dacca follows closely the Burhi Ganga River and the railway line. Along the riverbank are many busy brickworks, as the expansion of the two towns calls for more and more building materials. Because it is a delta region, the plains



of East Pakistan possess no source of rock or even gravel, and the hills to the east are just soft sandstone and shale. Concrete has to be made from baked bricks laboriously chipped to make "ballast," and consequently building costs are high despite the relative cheapness of labour. Along some stretches of the road Munir urges his father to keep level with the express train running parallel to them, so that he can wave at the driver of the shining new diesel locomotive. East Pakistan has no coal and finds it cheaper to run its railways on diesel oil than to buy coal from India.

When they reach home, Mrs. Huq has exciting news for them. Her uncle, who is a doctor in Calcutta in India, has invited them all to spend a holiday there when the school term is over. They are going to fly there and back, which makes it all the more thrilling and will save endless trouble, as the rail journey involves a five-hour steamer journey up the Ganges from Narayanganj to Goalundo, and inevitable difficulties crossing the border into India. Before partition, all parts of Bengal were closely tied to Calcutta, and many people in Dacca still have relatives there.

CONCLUSION

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ONLY a small fraction of the people of Pakistan have a standard of living as high as that of the Huq family, which would not be regarded as luxurious in Britain. The majority of Pakistanis are very much poorer than any British factory worker or agricultural labourer. All too many families are desperately poor, and a crop failure can spell economic disaster and real hunger, for there are too few ways of making a living apart from farming. The greatest problem facing Pakistan as a whole, and East Pakistan in particular, is how to feed the growing population without its standard of living falling still lower. If that problem can be solved, then energies can be turned to trying to raise living standards. Pakistan is not alone in the world in this respect. In different degrees many countries face a similar difficulty: India, Ceylon and most countries of south-east Asia close at hand. But in some ways Pakistan's problems are more acute, and those of East Pakistan are most difficult to solve.

How can Pakistan ensure that her people have enough to eat, enough to wear and all the essentials for a reasonable standard of living? For a country so predominantly agricultural, the problem of food supply *should* not arise, yet several times during the last few years she has had to *import* food from abroad to avoid serious famine. This suggests that there are too many people for the farmers to feed using their present methods of cultivation, the methods that have



been in use with little change for many centuries. Certainly there is room for improving the system of agriculture, but many of the obvious improvements cost more money than the average Bengali farmer can afford. He could use improved strains of seed, artificial fertilisers to obtain a bigger crop from his land, and by using a small diesel pump to make better use of water resources he might grow additional crops during the dry season. Apart from the fact that all these improvements cost money, there is as great a problem of telling farmers what they could do, and persuading them to change their methods. Above all, education is the crying need throughout the land, particularly education in practical farming.

If farmers are ever to be able to pay for improved methods of cultivation, most of them will have to farm larger areas than they do at present. This is so that their crop production will be adequate both to feed their family and to pay back money borrowed to introduce improvements. Here is another headache for the Pakistan Government. Half the farms in the country have less than two acres of land, and some members of their owners' families have to find ways of earning money elsewhere. If farms like these are to become sound economic units they will have to be reduced in number, and the land redistributed to make each farm bigger. This process will turn yet more landless people to search for work in the towns, or even to emigrate to Britain to find jobs !

East Pakistan is a land with few resources other than her soil, her forests and her people. Apart from what her farmers can produce, almost everything else she needs has to be imported. True, natural gas has recently been discovered in Sylhet, and hydro-electricity will soon be produced from the Karnafuli River. Yet the country lacks most of the raw materials that are regarded as essential for a thriving economy—coal, oil, iron and other minerals. The only way in which she can obtain the raw materials and manufactured goods she requires (like machinery and motor-cars) is to buy them abroad with the money she earns from the sale of whatever she can export.

As you might expect, East Pakistan's exports are all agricultural in origin. This is true also of Pakistan as a whole, for West Pakistan is only slightly better off in the matter of resources. In the list of the country's exports jute (all from East Pakistan) accounts for half the total value, cotton (mostly from West Pakistan) for one-third. Taking East Pakistan alone, jute made up 82 per cent. of exports, tea 7 per cent., hides and skins 2 per cent. At present Pakistan uses the money she earns by these exports partly to buy food and essential materials like petrol, and partly to set up her own industries, e.g. jute mills, in order to create jobs for the non-agricultural population. She does not export enough, however, to cover the whole cost of developments like this, and she is being helped a great deal by loans and gifts of money and equipment from friendly countries. One of the most valuable schemes that is helping her is the Colombo Plan, by which wealthier and more highly developed countries like Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the U.S.A. send her money, machinery and technical experts. They also train Pakistanis in modern farming methods, mechanical engineering, medicine, and so on.

East Pakistan's problems are all bound up together. The solution of one difficulty depends on the solution of another. The better medical facilities that are now available are making life better for many, but this means that people live longer, and that there are every year more mouths to feed. East Pakistan is trying to make sure that every available patch of land is being used to the full, but the size of the problem is formidable. There is a grave risk that as more and more people become dependent on the land, less jute will be grown for export, so that more rice can be grown for food. Then there will be less money available for developing new industries, and energies needed to raise the low standards of living will be absorbed in the grim necessity of just keeping people alive.

There are real possibilities for development in Pakistan and in other countries of southern Asia. You will read more and more



about them as you grow older, and it is to be hoped that, as time goes on, the amount of help that can be given by more fortunate countries like our own will steadily increase. For only in this way does it appear possible that the future of the children in the families you have read about in this book can be made more hopeful than it seems at present.

## GLOSSARY

**aman** main paddy crop sown during rainy season; harvested at beginning of dry season

**aus** paddy sown in early rains and harvested during rainy season

**backswamp** lowest land in a delta, lying away from the river

**baithak khana** hut in **bari** used for visitors

**bari** rural homestead consisting of several huts

**bhadoi** the rainy season (adjective)

**bigha** common measure of area, about one-third acre

**bil** swamp or lake

**boro** paddy grown in dry season

**broadcast** method of sowing seed directly on to field where the crop will be harvested

**bund** low wall of mud to keep water level in paddy field

**chapatti** pancake of brown flour and water

**char** newly formed land in river bed

**chota barsat** the “little rains,” of April–May

**dao** long-bladed knife used by hill people for cutting bamboo and as a planting tool

**degchi** cooking pot

**dhoti** cotton loincloth commonly worn by Hindus

**dunga** water scoop for raising irrigation water

**flat** flat-bottomed cargo barge much used for river transport. Pushed or pulled by steamer

**ghi** clarified butter, or vegetable cooking oil

**gourds** vegetables like pumpkins, marrows, etc.

**gunny** sack cloth made from jute

**gur** crudely made sugar

**haor** lake (term used in Sylhet)

**jhum** shifting cultivation of hill districts

**jute** plant producing strong fibre, Pakistan's main cash crop

**khesari** a pea-like crop, grown for food and fodder

**kyaung** Buddhist temple



**levee** naturally formed raised belt along river bank

**lungi** cotton skirt worn by men

**maund** measure of weight: 82 lb.

**mattock** a digging tool

**mosque** Muslim place of worship

**paddy** unhusked rice, also the growing rice crop

**pardah** practice of women who cover their faces in public

**rabi crops** those grown in the dry season

**sari** long piece of material worn by women

**transplanted paddy** crop sown in a seed bed from which the seedlings are transplanted to their final growing position in another field

**tank** an excavated rectangular pond

## WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

**money** 16 annas = 1 rupee (about 1s. 6d.)

**weight** 1 seer (2.057 lb.)

40 seers = 1 maund (82.244 lb.)

**length** English measures are used

**area** The bigha is the common unit.  $3\frac{1}{40}$  bighas = 1 acre

## TRAVEL

East Pakistan can be reached most easily by air. Daily services link Dacca with West Pakistan (Karachi and Lahore), and with Calcutta in India. There are internal air services between Dacca and Jessore

and Chittagong, but most people travel about the country by train or by steamer or launch on the many river routes. By sea there is a regular service between Chittagong and Karachi, but the voyage takes a week. This route is more important for goods than for passengers. Trade with foreign countries passes mainly through Chittagong and Chalna Anchorage (near Khulna).

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